

A
MARVEL
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THE MAGAZINE OF CINEMA AND TELEVISION FANTASY No.25 60p

STARBURST

BATTLESTAR & BUCK ROGERS COME TO TELEVISION!

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH EXECUTIVE
PRODUCER GLEN LARSON

**STEPHEN KING'S
SALEM'S LOT ON TV**

WE SPEAK TO THE STAR DAVID SOUL

THE STAR WARS INTERVIEWS

PRODUCER GARY KURTZ AND DIRECTOR
IRVIN KERSHNER

HOW SUPERMAN FLIES

BY SPECIAL EFFECTS WIZARD, ZORAN PERISIC

**THE FANTASTIC FILMS
OF JACK ARNOLD**

FROM IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE
TO THE SPACE CHILDREN

**ROBIN "MORK" WILLIAMS
IN POPEYE...THE MOVIE!**



FIRST COLOUR PICTURES!





THE STAR WARS INTERVIEWS

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AND DIRECTOR IRVIN
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STARBURST REPORTER,
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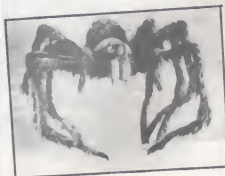


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STARBURST LETTERS

DEATH TO BROSNAN!

Is John Brosnan tired of living? His opinion of Yoda would certainly lead one to think so.

Yoda was a stroke of genius on the part of George Lucas and was skillfully operated by Frank Oz. Ha, Yoda, did not look at all like a Muppet.

R. Edwards & G. Meed,
Dartford,
Kent.

Who is this man John Brosnan? How in Darth Vader's name can he say that *The Empire Strikes Back* is a disappointment?

How he can say that Yoda's end Luke's quest to learn more about the Force was tedious is beyond my reckoning.

For me, Yoda steals the show. He is so real and original that it wouldn't surprise me if next year Yoda's creator, Frank Oz, receives a special Oscar for him.

James Doody,
London, NW10.

Well, it's taken three years, but George Lucas has finally done it. *The Empire Strikes Back* is here and it was well worth the wait. It was pure magic. But after reading Mr Brosnan's review in *Starburst* 23, I feel he has been a bit unfair. Is Yoda really boring? Or is it just that Mr Brosnan is not philosophical? Anyway, the audience didn't seem to think he was boring. They cheered and laughed at most of Yoda's hilarious scenes (especially when he finds Luke's torch and argues with R2). I thought he was great.

I certainly did not feel disappointed at the end, and neither did the audience. They clapped for at least two minutes. I also feel that Mr Brosnan has hugely exaggerated the fact that the film has a "cliff-hanging ending".

Kevin McGann,
Liverpool.

... The final straw (you know, the one that broke the camel's back) came when Brosnan said that the love affair was "unconvincing and a serious misjudgement".

What's the men talking about when he says that Han and Leia's *funniest* moment is when they declare their love for each other? Obviously, Mr Brosnan, you have never been in love and do not know what you are talking about. Nobody laughed when I saw the film in Leeds recently.

"A disappointment" said Mr Brosnan. Oh dear, I don't feel sorry for you, you're missing out on all the fun.

T. Kovaks,
Wakefield,
West Yorks.

Although it isn't my wish to grumble about such a wonderful magazine as *Starburst*, I find myself heaving to complain most strongly about the John Brosnan review of *The Empire Strikes Back*. The whole review was distasteful, to say the least, but one comment was just too much. The comment in question was "while I could just about take the pseudo-mystical waffle about the Force when it was simply an incidental part of *Star Wars*, I'm finding it more than a little tedious now that it's been promoted to stage centre."

Waffle, indeed! Had Mr Brosnan bothered to look further than the end of his nose he would have known a little more about the part the Force played in *Star Wars*. The only reason why the Empire, which the rebels were fighting, came into being was that the old Republic had been "eaten away from within" by some of the Jedi Knights (who policed it) being attracted to the evil of the "Dark Side of the Force", i.e. Darth Vader.

Also, the Death Star would have destroyed the Rebels on Yavin's moon had Luke Skywalker not used the Force to help destroy the deadly foe.

So now I come to *The Empire Strikes Back* itself. The Force has to play a large part if the new film is to carry on from the first with any measure of success. Luke must become a fully-fledged Jedi

so he can destroy the threat of Darth Vader. For how ever powerful the Rebels are to become they cannot win if the Dark Lord lives.

The Force is what makes *Star Wars* stand so far above the space films that abound nowadays. These films may have action but they certainly do not have such a strong, flowing theme, such as the Force is.

So in conclusion, I ask *Starburst* not to let Mr Brosnan infect its pages with such "waffle".

Robert P. Fraser,
Nuneaton,
Warks.

I am an avid reader of *Starburst* and generally enjoy all the articles, but I must protest at John Brosnan's review of *The Empire Strikes Back*. I would advise him to have his brain checked.

How can he say the Empire is a "disappointment"? When I saw the film I enjoyed it thoroughly and was very impressed, and the rest of the audience seemed to feel the same way as me.

I particularly disagreed with

his comment that Han and Leia's relationship was "unconvincing and a serious misjudgement". I thought that it was one of the saga's most interesting developments.

Can I take my place in the queue to lynch John Brosnan?

Miss Joanna Lord,
Barnsley,
S. Yorks.

Having read John Brosnan's comments on "Mundanes" in his review of *The Empire Strikes Back* (*Starburst* 23), I was left wondering if Mr Brosnan is himself a "Mundane" since he seems intent upon exaggerating the faults of each and every film he reviews. When all is said and done, posterity will judge *Star Trek* — The Motion Picture to have only one major flaw — complete lack of pacing — and thus, the general feeling of slowness that pervades the film. Otherwise, it was fine. To read Brosnan's review thereof, one would think the film was the worst thing to happen to since Herbert George Wells passed into eternity. And his finicky comments on the nerveless Alien



Yoda: "Muppet in Space" or "Show-stealer"?

were irritating, to say the least. Look, we all know that no film is going to be perfect, but to overdo criticism in every case does not do anyone any good, so a little more fair-mindedness please, Mr Brosnan? If not, could I suggest Saturn as a suitable place of exile?

Otherwise, your magazine is superb, although a full colour poster for the centre pages would enhance it even more – what do other readers think?

Roy Meenan,
Eire.

I enjoy reading your magazine very much as I've been a science-fiction fan since I was about three years old! But, I'm sorry to say, I have a few complaints to make. Firstly, I think you should get rid of one of your reviewers, John Brosnan because I have read his reviews on *Meteor*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *The Black Hole* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, and disagree with most of his comments. I was very surprised at him in his review of *The Empire Strikes Back* (Starburst 23), I went mad when I read this comment on Yoda saying, I quote, "after a few minutes of his company I was yearning to stuff him down the nearest Black Hole!" And just what does he mean by "the apparent lack of originality". I, and I'm sure a lot of Star Wars fans would agree, think that *The Empire Strikes Back* is better than *Star Wars*.

Caroline Higgins,
London W1.

After seeing *The Empire Strikes Back* we began to wonder if we had seen the same film that had been reviewed by John Brosnan in Starburst 23! Indeed was he reviewing the same film that other critics had reviewed under the same title. For example, *Empire* received top rating of four stars from one Sunday newspaper, ratings of "tremendous" from several magazines not to mention good radio reviews!

Why was *Empire* such a disappointment? Surely John Brosnan should not make such sweeping statements as it was certainly no disappointment to us nor seemingly to the rest of the

audience many of whom did not leave their seats until the final credits had rolled (and that lasted five minutes!)

As regards Yoda and the force, Yoda was an ingenious invention and far from being tedious, his scenes as well as being essential to the storyline were often humorous or at least the audience thought so but as John Brosnan – the almighty reviewer – thought otherwise they must have all been wrong! As for the Force this is a basis for the whole *Star Wars* series and without its existence much of the film would be meaningless, indeed would it take place?

In our opinion John Brosnan did not write a well-balanced review but had a good old moan at the expense of *Empire*, and any one can moan, you don't have to be qualified to do that!

So apart from J.B.'s referring to *Star Wars* as an old man refers to the good old days, he did not include the usual synopsis of the story nor did he mention John Williams' magnificent score.

Everyone is antipathetic to their own opinion but not to the point where the writer's personal bitter feelings take over to the degree that the original aim of the article is lost. After all, are your reviews not meant to provide readers with a reasonable guide on which films are worth seeing and which are not? If this is so then in this aspect you have failed miserably.

So in future please try to print reviews that have something worthwhile to say. By all means criticise but remember that the good points of a film should also be included in a review.

Looking back over previous issues I see John Brosnan has been the subject of complaints before (dere I say criticism?). As so many people disagree with him he is perhaps not the best person for the job as he does not present an overall view of a film.

Misses C & J. Hindle,
Chapel-en-le-Frith,
Derbyshire.

It should be interesting to see what John Brosnan has to say in his own defence. Stay tuned...

FANTASY FILM CHART

I find that your *Top Fantasy Film Chart* – Starburst 21 – invites criticism for several reasons.

The *High* and *The Mighty* for instance – herldly a work of inventive speculation now is it?

My list would not include films that depicted events that are not out of the ordinary – however it may appear to the protagonists.

Anyway, my main point is this – how can we judge the success or popularity of any film by its takings at the box office?

According to the articles, there is no assessment made using a 'bottom' count. After all, a film's worth is judged by the amount of people who paid to see it at current admission prices.

Gone With the Wind fell behind *The Sound of Music* because the receipts were compared, not how many seats were occupied.

So, can we have the facts? Perhaps the box-office receipts can be adjusted to take inflation into account. That way we may get a fair idea of how popular a film was at the time if there are no figures available for how many fens actually saw it.

Len Cooler,
Hastings,
Sussex.

Tony Crawley, our intrapud charter, replies: Len, if you know the time and effort it takes compiling Starburst's Top Fantasy Film Chart (even when good old Variety has done all the spade-work), maybe you wouldn't complain. On the other hand, that is exactly what these charts are for. To stimulate comment, argument, interest and maybe settle the odd bet or two... We list the box-office takes of our kind of movies as a guide to how one played off against another, and to highlight the odd surprise entry or two. I mean, who among us had even heard of Fred Walton's When A Stranger Calls before it beeked its way into the No 61 (all-time) position inside less than a year's business?

Alas, only the French work

*out their box-office returns from the actual number of filmgoers' bums on seats. Len, Very French, you might say and I'd have to agree. Let's face it, if people are prepared to pay the currently exorbitant prices for a film, this must prove its attraction – or not. The fact that we now pay triple (or more) than what it cost our grandparents to see *Gone With The Wind* (let alone for our petrol, food, rent, etc) is neither here nor there; our great-great grandparents paid even less to see *Birth of a Nation*.*

*As to the inclusion of The High and The Mighty – come on Len, I explained why in my article. You don't take issue with the various disaster fantasies listed, so why pick on John Wayne's flick which happened to be the first of this post-war line in jeopardy thrillers. As such, it deserves its place... and will remain there, until K.Oed by any of its rip-offs or other films, which doesn't look likely for a few years yet. Even at 1954 ticket prices, *The High and The Mighty* earned more than *Barbarella*, *Fantastic Voyage*, *Rocky Horror* and a couple of the Planet of the Apes films!"*

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THINGS TO COME

WARS STAR

Surprise, surprise . . . Why, it's Luke GI-walker as Mark Hemill goes to war on *this* galaxy end not so very long ago, 1939-45, in the much awaited comeback of Hollywood veteran director, Sam Fuller — *The Big Red One*. Mark plays Griff, one of Lee Mervin's "Four Horsemen" squad, a possible coward — or at least the one GI who cannot shoot an enemy when he can see his eyes. A dab hand in the dark then. His co-squadees include the excellent Bobby DiCicco from Spielberg's 1941 . . . and Mark even gets to grips with a woman for once (but not in the overly edited release version, for twice) in the personage of French star Stephane Audran, wife of director Claude Chebrol, a great friend of Fullers.



let you know more when we see it. We've plenty of time. It doesn't open in Britain until Boxing Day.

NIGHTMARE MOVIE

Romero Rip-Off, part 584 . . . Umberto Lenzi's *Nightmare City* could well be called (and who's to say it won't be?) *Flight of the Zombies*. They arrive in the city via an unidentified plane — survivors of an atom research centre's leak, suffering from "the progressive necrosis of cellular tissue" it says here. They need constant renewal of their blood, so you can guess the rest . . . Wholesale murder and mayhem as tv news men Hugo Stiglitz (from the dreaded Tintorera) tries to save Laura Trotter and others. And then he wakes. It's all been a dream. Off he goes to the airport on an assignment . . . when an unidentified plane lands and out stream the bloodthirsty survivors of an atom plant leak . . . or as the Italian synopsis has it, "leakage".



KING O'THE WALK

The young Egyptian movie mogul, Dodi Fayed, at the Allied Stars combo responsible for backing *Breking Glass* — has beaten all Hollywood to Stephen King's next book, *Firestarter* . . . which sounds a continuation of one of his characters in *The Stand*. It's not, in fact, as the central character is female. With all the usual supernatural powers, Dodi, forever on the go between his offices in London, New York and L.A., won the rights with a cool million dollars end expects to spend another 15-million on the film, due to start shooting in January. He promises "a mass of special effects".

King fans would be more pleased if he stuck to Stephen's book after the manner in which Stanley Kubrick has flung the original out of the window in his version of *The Shining*. Stan the Man started trying to poach the British press from Cannes to New York for his first screening of the film; apart from his pel, Alexander Welker, they all turned him down. Maybe wisely. Despite good opening business in the States, *Variety*'s reviews of the film warned "this may be Warner Brothers' biggest box-office disappointment since *Exorcist II*"! We'll

CORMAN HORROR

The Corman boys are moving out into the world. Joe Dante, the *Piranha* (ha-ha) director has followed Chuck Griffith out of Roger's camp. He's followed John Carpenter to Avco-Embassy in fact, to turn Gary Brandner's *The Howling* into a scaryin' experience for the winter . . . John Sayles and Terence Winkless supply the script which has overtures of the wolfman bit — "beyond the creatures of the devil, the deep and alien space, they are waiting on the edge of darkness to awaken the most



In a while, crocodile.

Part Two of our *Things to Come Cannes* Special from our man-on-the-spot, Tony Crawley, featuring a double helping of poster-artwork from many of the fantasy films on show.



primeval fears in us all . . ." as a rapist's gunned-down body disappears from the police morgue and begins infiltrating the body and soul of the hubby of our heroine. She is, but of course, a tv newsperson a la Fonda.

FILM BUFF

Dennis Christopher, breaking away from his Peter Yates' image, is the murderous young film buff in Vernon Zimmerman's *Fade To Black* — killing off people in the style of his favourite movie murders, from Western shoot-outs to *Dracula* and *Mummy* style setpieces.



FOREWARNED IS...

We think Greydon Clark's new film is called *The Warning*. We don't quite understand why we presume this to be so, but we do . . . Actually the poster is not bad; it's the chest that makes it seem such a no-no. Jack Palance

MECHANICAL MAID



Robot 'n' Roll. Britain's amazing new-wave singing-acting find, Hazel O'Connor also pinched a notion or two from the original *Metropolis* — in this great robotic get-up in *Breaking Glass*. Brigitte Helm, she ain't . . . but Hazel and her movie (directed by TV men Brian Gibson) were far better than *The Apple* or the official Canadian musical entry deemed big enough to open the festival. That was called *Fantastica* — an it wasn't.



Musical SF. Paradoxically, the richest sf moments at Cannes were in musicals . . . Israeli Menahem Golan's *The Apple* is a spirited rocker set in a metropolis circa 1994. George Gilmour and lovely Catharina Mary Stewart enter the Worldvision Song Festival and run foul of, not Terry Wogan, but the evil ten-percenter Vladek Sheybal . . . until fleeing to a new planet.

THINGS TO COME

hasn't made a decent film for at least a full decade, and will never be forgiven by this column for *The Shaps of Things to Come*. Martin Landau has gone to seed since *Space 1999*, and the least said about Cameron Mitchell after *Supersonic Man*, the better. At least Neville Brand is on hand he never takes any dumb script seriously and tends to make them worth watching. Not always worth the paying, just the viewing... But we'll see!

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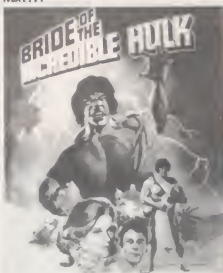
BRENDA STARR REPORTER



HER FIRST MOTION PICTURE

SCREENPLAY BY ERNEST LEHMAN

Next...



COMIC STARR

The search is on in Hollywood for the girl to play the country's No. 1 comic strip heroine, girl reporter Brenda Starr. A Friedman-Meyer production, in association with Brenda's boss, the Chicago Trib and New York News Syndicate, the script has been completed by no less than the great Hitchcock sidekick Ernie Lehman. Can't be bad. Lehman wrote *North by Northwest* and *Family Plot*. Yes, he also scripted *The Sound of Music* and *Hallo Dolly*. But don't hold that against him... Some talk of Susan Anton in the lead, or Suzanne Somers or even Cheryl Ladd.



Starbuck Lives. Or just about... Dirk Benedict illustrates why he couldn't move from *Batdstar Galactica* to *Galactica 1980* on American television. He was too busy trying to stay alive in his new movie, *Ruckus*. The Montana country boy plays a war-weary veteran of Vietnam home again with nothing much to offer than his ability to kill a man in six seconds with his bare hands. *The Exorcist*'s Linda Blair (lord, how she's grown!) co-stars but no one steals Dirk's big scene. Eating two raw hamburgers...



Like Dino's *Conan*, the movie version of Milt Caniff's strip hero, *Terry and the Pirates*, is taking its time... Shooting finally begins this autumn and Avco plans to open their 'super production' by the summer of '81. So once *Flash Gordon* and *Superman II* have departed, here comes... *Terry*! Still no casting — and Burt Reynolds is obviously out. But the saga looks good as *Terry*,

Connie, Pet Ryan and Co. flee the arm of warlord General Kang The Butcher on their sloop, the *Jede Pilgrim*, get involved with a jewel of a princess called Moon Blaze, get trapped by Pat's girl, working for the dreaded Wu Tu and rescued by the Dragon Lady on the Island of the Giant Buddha and continue their battles with the torturous Wu Tu and the equally vile Kang... Phew!

THINGS TO COME

THE ISLAND



Jaws 4? After the two *Jaws* films, plus *The Deep*, Peter Benchley finally gets to write his own script for the Zanuck/Brown film of his latest seaside chiller, *The Island*. Michael Caine heads a very British cast for the Bahamas mystery, supported by David Warner, Frank Middlemass, Don Henderson (from *Star Wars*), Dudley Sutton and Colin Jeavons. But the girl, Angela Punch McGregor is Australian and the music Italian via Ennio Morricone. Michael Ritchie directs.



TAKE A MONSTER TO LUNCH...

Seems to me this one has been popping up at Cannes for the last couple of years. But that's the way it goes. Films are announced one year, hyped a little more the next — when still looking for cash or stars, or more cash for more stars — and then finally, they're screened. The grand old John Carradine is a priest in this one, as Jim Mithum a clone for his Dad, attempts to put an end to the monster killing everyone and everything around a South American lake polluted by an US-run cement plant. It's *Prophecy* all over again — only worse, I'm told — directed by Herbert L. Strock (oh, that Herbert L. Strock) with producer Ken Hartford responsible for designing and indeed operating the *Monster* — constructed by Steve Czerkas of Cinema Dynamics and Optical Systems Corporation. Wonder who operated old John Carradine...?

And so, finally, to the real surprise star of the 33rd Cannes festival. A certain Dez Skinn, erstwhile spinster of this parish of ours... It's some time now since he ceased editing his *Sterburst* baby, passed the reins to Allen McKenzie, went out into the world again and announced in *Sterburst* 20 that surely his future news would appear in this sacred column. I knew it would, too. I just didn't expect it to emanate from Cannes.

But there he was. Not physically, but in the form we know him best for — comic strips. Represented by a wondrous piece of comic artistry (by John Bolton) promoting Lord Lew Grade's *Monster Club* movie from producer Milton Subotsky. Dez and John's lavish 32-page movie-comic was a brilliant way for Grade's ITC combine to spread the good word about their movie — and made a lasting impression on potential buyers. They could, after all, take the comic home with them, unlike the ceaseless round of promotional of other films they saw on cassettes.

"Comic strips and movies have much in common," says Dez, "even their terminology overlaps." And who should know this better than he — apart from maybe, Fellini, that is.

DEZ SKINN PRESENTS



Over the past five years, Dez Skinn has been responsible, via his winning team of artists, or various movie-strips, from *Mad Magazine* spoofs to the memorable *House of Hammer* work, to *Doctor Who Weekly*, not forgetting,

of course, the use of strips in the early issues of *Sterburst* itself, which Dez launched via his Pioneer Press in 1977.

Now, he has already reversed the coin... The *Monster Club* book turns a movie into a comic before a single frame of film had been shot. The end-result, — pity it's not on sale (yet?), it's terrific with a great oil-painting cover — provided Milton Subotsky and director Roy Ward Baker with more than they bargained for. John Bolton's 150 frames constituted the best storyboard possible of the film itself, plus countless ideas for set designs, monster make-up and even camera angles. And in fact, I've since heard from Elstree studios, that the film's first monster (played by James Laurenson) now has make-up exactly as per Bolton's artwork...

The way these lads are going (and Dez and his new partner, Graham Marsh, ex-art director of *Company* magazine, have great new offices in Dean Street), I expect them to make a film of their own before long. Directed by Dez or John or Graham... or if they'd only study my film reviews once in a while, by me. You never know, it could finish up at the 34th Cannes festival... next year.

It's a monster of a hit!

Ian Christie, Daily Express



MARK HAMILL · HARRISON FORD · CARRIE FISHER
BILLY DEE WILLIAMS · ANTHONY DANIELS

CASTING BY DAVID PROWSE · KIMBERLY SAUER · PETER MARSH · FRANCIS
DIRECTED BY IRVIN KERSHNER · PRODUCED BY GARY KURTZ
SCREENPLAY BY LEIGH BRACKETT AND LAWRENCE KASDAN · BASED UPON CHARACTERS CREATED BY GEORGE LUCAS
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GEORGE PAL

1908-1980

An Obituary by Tise Vahimagi

PICTURE THE SCENE. A giant memorial in the grand style of a War of the Worlds martian war machine, manta ray-like with its cobra-head death ray standing proudly above. Underneath, the words: "George Pal — He Made Imaginations Sparkle With Wonder." And filing slowly past this unique memorial are such wondrous characters as Clayton Forrester (played by Gene Barry), Doc Savage (played by Ron Ely), Dr Lao (played by Tony Randall), Christopher Leiningen (played by Charlton Heston), the Brothers Grimm, Tom Thumb, the men from Atlantis, and various martians, puppets and morlocks.

However, all this can only be in the mind's eye of a fantasy film buff. A colourful fantasy for a colourful character, now no longer with us.

George Pal, puppeteer-producer-director, died on March 16, 1980, of a heart attack. He was 72. Pal, one of the pioneers of special effects photography in Hollywood, was one of the foremost filmmakers in the science fiction-fantasy genre. His credits (needless to say) include some of the genre's most memorable titles — Destination Moon, War of the Worlds, When Worlds Collide, The Naked Jungle, Conquest of Space, The Time Machine, 7 Faces of Dr Lao, etc, etc.

The name of George Pal, for the film buff, evokes fond and frightening but ultimately enjoyable memories of Martian war machines laying waste to Los Angeles, the tidal wave hitting New York City and engulfing Time Square, a spaceship being holed by a meteorite, the Marabunta swarming over the South American plantation, the Time Traveller watching fashions change in the clothes-shop window, the mysterious Oriental Doctor arriving in the Western town, and many, many more.

George Pal, more than most filmmakers, truly remains the cinema's magician, the master of visual make-believe who not only waged wonder in the Fifties, incited imagination during the Sixties, and exhibited excitement along the Seventies but will for countless decades stir, sparkle and surprise future generations of filmgoers.



Above: George Pal poses for a photograph with the crew of the space ship from Conquest of Space (1954). Below: A scene from Pal's 1951 movie, When Worlds Collide.



A STARBURST
FILM REVIEW

The Blood Spattered Bride

Sheridan le Fanu's female Dracula -- Mircala, Carmila, call her what you will -- pops up for a new airing, and in the most bizarre fashion in this censoriously chopped about Spanish trip through the old Gothic corridors...

She, in the very fetching personage of Britain's Alexandra Bastedo, turns up one day on a lonely beach. Our newly-wedded hero is out for a stroll. There's no one around. Nothing in sight. Well, except for this breathing tube affair sticking out of the sand.

Intriguing...

Our hero starts digging like a demented dog around the tube... and finds it attached to an underwater breathing-mask, under which are the vibrant eyes of Alexandra (or indeed Alexander, if you read the Eagle Films handout).

No, it's definitely a female Alex, for as our hero digs on, gosh almighty, she reveals what Pete 'n' Dud used to call a lady's busty substances.

Director Vincente Aranda has obviously seen Russ Meyer's *Cherry, Harry and Raquel* (1969), where in the enobled superstructure of the formidable Uschi Digart was similarly displayed under the sands. Quite a picture.

Unfortunately, one cannot say the same of the movie. Or not now. Vincente Aranda wrote the script as well, but whether he was consulted about the sub-titles is a matter, presumably, for him and his lawyers. There are, to say the least of it, some very stupid lines, numerous silly ones, and quite a few tongue-in-cheek rejoinders... When the hero (*Simon Andreu*) consults a local doctor -- well, not that local considering his sudden Brooklyn accent -- and seeks aid for his just-wed wife who is going a trifle bananas, the medico says sorry and all that, but he really cannot help. "I was trained for normal illnesses."

Bobby Dupea looks at the latest addition to Sheridan le Fanu's legend of Carmila the Vampire: a Spanish movie starring Britain's Alexandra Bastedo as the beautiful, vampiric Carmila.





Opposite: Susan (Maribel Martin) rescues Carmila (Alexandra Bastedo) from the steel jaws of the gamekeeper's trap. Above: Carmila supervises the horrible mutilation of Susan's husband. Right: Susan wields Carmila's dagger like a professional. Below: Carmila and Susan form a blood bond.



Maribel Martin is the chubby-faced, virginal bride — or the fully-dressed version; she employed a body-double for her nude scenes. She's in quite a mess this new bride, forever wanting to leave anywhere her hubby has just ensconced them — first their wedding-night hotel, then his chateau — until she becomes virtually hypnotised by a woman she keeps seeing around and about her . . . who (which?) proves to be the ghost of a previous bride of the Karstein household, some 200 years before.

Ghost is perhaps not quite the right noun. As this Mircala Karstein's mutilated portrait in the cellar bears witness, she has a date of birth — but not one for her death. She is, as of course we all know, sitting and yawning in the stalls, one of the great undead. A vampire.

And she it is, who is discovered under the sand dunes, and becomes an overnight guest at the chateau. She introduces herself as Carmila, and puts even more of a hex on poor Maribel. By the time she's gone next morning, Maribel has taken on much of her personality — including her habit of wearing a handful of rings, with the stones turned inside . . .

An odd fashion, one I certainly haven't come across before. "When I close my hand," says Mircala/Carmila in a deft explanation, "I like to feel something inside."

Ah yes, very Freudian, I'm sure.

In short, it's the same old story, and has been told rather better before — especially by Roger Vadim in *Blood and Roses* (1960). Senor Aranda tries a mite too hard in equating modern psychiatric problems with vampiric legends of yore, not to mention an appetite for blood which can only make one wonder about the antecedence of his own family line.

It's not long before the bride of the title is not so much blood-spattered as thoroughly drenched in the stuff.

The censor, however, has stepped in for the grand (guinol) finale, where our rich hubby chappie (not unlike Vadim to look at, incidentally), finally locates his missing wife and the Mircala/Carmila person sharing a connubial, midnight coffin for two, and goes into his Peter Cushing/Van Helsing number . . .

Cut! To a newspaper headline about a man killing two women . . . and tearing their hearts out.

Funny fella, our censor. He cuts out the heart-cutting-out but leaves in a fantasy sequence of Maribel (aided by Alexandra Bastedo) mutilating her husband while he sleeps . . .

The Blood Spattered Bride (1979)

Simon Andreu (as *The Husband*) Maribel Martin (Susan, the Bride), Alexandra Bastedo (Mircala/Carmila). Written and directed by Vincente Aranda. An Eagle Films release. Time: 100 mins Cert: X

ZONE TV ZONE

This month sees the debut of a new regular column on the current state of television by *Starburst's* tv

Television exists to serve many purposes and many different types of people. It reaches into most every corner of the globe and touches the lives of well over half the world's population.

Television may also be regarded as a great electronic Jekyll and Hyde. At its worst, there is nothing more horrible. At its best, there can be nothing better.

For good or bad, television therefore has come to affect everyone's life at some time or another (excepting, maybe, a couple of characters deep in the New Guinea rain forest who are busy trying to invent the wheel).

On looking back, it was directly due to television that I plagued and hounded my parents for a Davy Crockett hat in the 1950s and that my punctuality took a nose dive because of watching items like *The Avengers* and *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* during the 1960s. During more recent years I've been observed rushing around the tv arena taking notes, making endless lists and worrying continually about all the programmes I'd missed. Fortunately, at the same time, I also discovered that I was not the only lunatic tv *afficionado*, for there are special clinics full of people who...

Various aspects of television can and do affect the most innocent of bystanders. Today, a hotel manager in some place like Wolverhampton (or it could be Chicago, or Melbourne) who may never watch tv and who may have never heard of *Star Trek* could find himself engulfed by a horde of Spocks, Kirks, Klingons and Romulans during a weekend convention. The same could apply to those unsuspecting souls who, unaware of items such as *Doctor Who*, may one day be confronted by a flock of enthused characters all wearing large, floppy hats and trailing twenty yards of woolly scarf behind them. So, in whatever form it takes, television reaches out and makes its mark on everyone.

But what of the state of television today? More specifically, what of the genre via the tube?

Television now either mirrors itself or emulates the successes of the big screen (there seemed to be a time, I recall, when the big screen was under a deluge of tv

now been buried). Anglia TV's *Tales of spin-offs*; fortunately, that dead horse has the *Unexpected* is not exactly a new concept, in fact a lot of the same stories were done better under the old Alfred Hitchcock Presents banner some twenty years ago. The upcoming (for British tv) *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* and *Battlestar Galactica* series are merely remote outposts of things more expertly packaged and produced for the cinema screen. *Star Wars* (along with its pioneering special effects) can be offered as Exhibit A.

New wrappers on old concepts should not be the solution to "new" Television. Who can honestly say that *Space: 1999*, for all its own values and merits, was a "fresh" idea in terms of episodic tv science fiction? Some few years earlier *Star Trek* had blazed a fiery trail and, quite logically, *Space: 1999* arrived to continue the route. Now why, for example, couldn't *Space: 1999* itself have blazed that tv trail in the late 1960s?

If the new wrappers/old concepts formula was used to disguise a certain lack of creative endeavour on behalf of the fantasy tv producers, then the advent of the mini-series appeared to inject fresh blood into a tired, limp body. However, whereas the idea of mini-series (ranging in length from four to fourteen hours) seemed like a creative leap in an exciting direction, the subject-matter and treatments have now degenerated to the level of high-gloss soap opera, catering for the lowest of brows. Nevertheless, I'm still holding out hope for the mini-series' versions of Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* (four hours) and Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles* (six hours), the latter adapted for tv by no less an artist than Richard Matheson.

The American tele-fantasy viewer has always seemed to have a slight edge over the Brit. He may have to put up with some of the same stuff (*Fantasy Island*, *Incredible Hulk*, etc) but he also has the opportunity (thus the choice) to study some of the genre's own history. Such shows as *The Outer Limits*, *Twilight Zone*, *The Avengers*, *Star Trek*, etc, are always creeping around somewhere on the US tv dial.

So what do we have by way of retro-

spect? Only two items come to mind: some colour segments from the '50s *Adventures of Superman* (in one or two ITV regions) and a selection from *The Outer Limits*. Personally, I'm delighted that we actually have *something*, especially the BBC's *Outer Limits*. But is it enough?

The screening of "old" tv material, whether it be colour or black & white, is an important factor which can have a two-pronged effect. From one point of view it can allow the student/fan/buff viewer to understand television (as well as the genre) a little better, to observe its changes and its progression, its methods and its styles. Otherwise, how is anyone to know if a 1980s tv product actually has any real value unless they are familiar, however slight, with its ancestors? Roald Dahl was involved in a fantasy series in 1961 entitled *Way Out*, which was built around a similar structure to that of the recent *Tales of the Unexpected*. Now, unless you've seen *Way Out* how can you judge and honestly rate *Tales of the Unexpected*?

The alternate point of view is that television has little or no respect for its own history, thus it denies interested observers from further appreciation. Almost a third of Television history has already been lost, a lot of it obviously because it was telecast "live". However, most of what was put on film for tv still exists, albeit in vaults and warehouses.

The question is, if television is there to serve the people, how much does it *serve* the people? And I'm talking about those knowledgeable viewers who know what they want, or at least know what they would like. The whole silly snakes 'n' ladders game operates like some form of "Catch-22". The tv companies have access to all this material, whether it be *Land of the Giants*, *Lost in Space*, *Fireball XL5*, *Journey to the Unknown*, whatever, but you're not going to see it unless you specifically ask for it. And in order to ask for it you have to know of its existence in the first place. If somebody writes to, say, the BBC asking for more "ghouls and ghosties" on tv then the person who reads the letter puts it in their tray marked "Loony" and goes

ZONE TV Z

TV ZO

expert, Tise Vahimagi. We'll be interested to hear your reactions to the column as it develops.



to lunch. But if that same person reads a letter that specifically requests a screening of, say, Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* then they at least know they are dealing with an informed and intelligent viewer.

It can be done and it *has* been done. The Six-of-One group has been instrumental in getting a re-airing of The Prisoner series, while the Star Trek fan organisations have done likewise for their show. Maybe there's even a clandestine group right now toiling away on behalf of Gerry Anderson's *The Secret Service* (see *Starburst* 20). I hope there is.

This *status quo* applies also to the vast world of made-for-tv movies, a goodly percentage of which are fantasy oriented. How many have seen, or even remember seeing Christopher Knopf's splendidly atmospheric *A Cold Night's Death*, or Gene Coon's delightful *Questor Tapes*, or Jerry Sohl's *Night Slaves*? All great stuff, but where is it? If you wanna see it you gotta tell somebody.

Having something of a greedy nature, I would like to see an anthology of some of the best episodes from some of my favourite series. For example, the *Fog* episode from *The Avengers* where Steed and Tara are stalked by a Jack the Ripper society. *Twilight Zone's Nightmare at 20,000 Feet*, where Bill Shatner is slowly driven nuts by a weird creature mangling one of the props of his in-flight plane. *The Prisoner's A, B & C*, in which number 6's dreams are penetrated and appear as pictures on a tv monitor. *Star Trek's The Devil in the Dark*, where Kirk and the boys discover that the Horta is not the devil it's made out to be. *The Time Tunnel's Pirates of Dead Man's Island*, in which Victor Jory's mad sea captain is accidentally brought back through the tunnel and goes berserk, killing guards and smashing computers. *Doctor Who's The Talons of Weng-Chiang*, involving the Doctor and Leela in an eerie combination of *Fu Manchu* and *Phantom of the Opera*. And the list can go on and on and on.

Wonder if Kubrick's *The Shining* will be on American tv before it's even released here theatrically?

GARY KURTZ

JOHN BROSINAN TALKS TO THE PRODUCER OF STAR WARS AND THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.



Photo by Joyce Agee

The term 'Hollywood producer' conjures up an image of a loud-talking, overweight, balding man wearing dark glasses, with a cigar jutting out of his mouth, and flanked by a couple of starlets (whatever happened to starlets anyway?). Nothing could be further from this image than Gary Kurtz. Though the producer of the most successful film ever made he is a quietly spoken man in his late thirties who bears a startling resemblance to Abraham Lincoln. He is also a Quaker which means no cigar or starlets, in fact his only vice appears to be comic book collecting.

Gary Kurtz is part of the Hollywood New Breed — a dedicated, serious film maker who is actually a *fan* of the genre he's working in. What the ghosts of the old Hollywood breed think of this we can only wonder. I imagine that the legendary moguls like Harry Cohn and Samuel Goldwyn are choking on their ghostly cigars as they look down (or up) at Kurtz and friends while muttering, "Hollywood's not the place it used to be..."

I spoke to Gary Kurtz at his hotel a few days after the London opening of *The Empire Strikes Back*. I'd been present at a press conference he'd given after the media premiere and had been amused at most of the questions that the journalists had asked which had ranged between being unbelievably pretentious to downright embarrassing ("Why do the baddies always miss when they're firing at the goodies?" asked one wit). I wondered what Kurtz had thought of the general level of questions and whether he agreed that the journalists either took the

picture too seriously or not seriously enough.

"I think that both their approaches are a little wrong though I usually like to say it's just a movie. To over-interpret it too much either way is a mistake. Many critics do tend to look at it a little more seriously than it *should* be looked at. I find that the further into Europe you go the more seriously and intellectually the cinema is taken. In France on *Star Wars*, for instance, I had several arguments with some of the left-wing critics who thought it was fascist propaganda. But in Italy the reverse happened — the press thought it was communist-inspired because it concerned the over-throwing of an existing government and so on. So it's interesting... but being a mythological tale it's therefore a symbolic one and each character is symbolic of something and depending on your point of view when you see it you see that element in the picture. That's one of the reasons why so many people get so many different responses out of the same movie."

I asked how difficult it had been to make a movie that would appeal to both children and adults. "Well, it never used to be difficult at all. In fact, almost every film produced by Hollywood once was intended just for an *audience* — children might have liked them or adults did — but there wasn't any real division of the market. But then we reached the point where there are films made only for children which adults can't stand and films made only for adults that children aren't allowed to watch. Obviously there are some stories that need telling that are

really only for adults — I think that's alright — but one of the reasons that *Star Wars* was so successful was because it was one of the only films to come out in a long while that both children and adults could go to see and enjoy on different levels at the same time."

I made the observation that the success of *Star Wars* had forced the Disney people to change tack and try to produce films that appealed to a wider audience, like *The Black Hole*.

"Yes," said Kurtz, "but Disney at the time Walt was alive did very innovative things. His films, even his early cartoon features, were not aimed strictly at children and there were some very interesting things in them. It's just lately, or in the last 10 years, that the Disney people got very conservative and decided not to try anything innovative. I hope they're getting away from that now. Some of the new animated features they're working on sound much more interesting."



And was he planning to make any other sf movies apart from the *Star Wars* series? "Not at the moment though I have two stories I'm interested in acquiring and can't really talk about yet. Right now I'm working with a writer on another story — it's a more personal drama that takes place during the Second World War. It's set here in England and is about a little girl. I'm also planning a musical comedy with Stan Freberg. Both are fairly straight-forward and simpler than *Star Wars* but I have an interest in other sf projects and many other written stories. Some of them are probably just more difficult to do than is yet possible to achieve, and also maybe some of them *shouldn't* be done as the reader is so important in a lot of stories. Once you formalise that type of story visually on the screen the magic disappears."

On the subject of visuals I mentioned that I'd read somewhere that Lucas hadn't been entirely satisfied with the

effects in *Star Wars* so how did they both feel about the effects in *Empire*?

"Well, I think that some of them work quite well. I think that you have to approach the effects first on the basis of whether they work dramatically for the scene they're in and then go on to technical quality. In a film that has as many effects shots as *Empire* — there are probably 800 different effects shots if

you count all the laser blasts and things that are animated — it's difficult to maintain the quality at the very highest peak throughout. You start out with the idea that you're going to do every shot at as high a standard as you possibly can without wasting more time and money on a shot once it gets to the point where it's acceptable but trying to decide *where* that point *is* is the difficult thing. A lot of



Opposite: Gary Kurtz. Left: A scene from *The Empire Strikes Back*: Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) with a medic droid. Above: The Empire's "gang of four" (left to right) Irvin Kershner, Gary Kurtz, George Lucas and Larry Kasdan. Below: Princess Leia and Lord Darth Vader (Dave Prowse) in *Star Wars*.



times you'll say a shot is okay and go on but then later change your mind and say it isn't quite okay. Another time you'll put in a shot that you know is a marginal one as far as quality is concerned and we should try and work on it more if there's time. So by the time you get towards the end you have a huge chart with all these shots on it and you've only crossed out a few while the rest still have more work to



Left: See-Threepio (Anthony Daniels) alone in the desert of Tatooine from *Star Wars*. Above: The heroes of *Star Wars* discuss their next course of action. Below: Gary Kurtz.



Photo by Joyce Agee

be done on them and ultimately you just run out of time. So you work out a priority system saying, *Well, this is the worst one so it needs the most work* . . . up to the ones where you say, *Well, these are almost okay so we can get by with them*. We could have easily spent another two years on *Empire* and got all the effects shots up to prime optimum quality but I'm not sure that the audience would find them any different or that it would have made any real difference to the picture."

I mentioned that one criticism I had concerned the backgrounds for *Cloud City*. I thought they looked rather fake — the buildings looked one-dimensional. "Well, one of the problems you have if you're doing an environment like that, which is, in this case, modified Thirties Art Deco, is the fact it's so unusual-looking that there's almost nothing you can do to prevent it from looking like a painting or a model. It doesn't look similar to a normal city so there's nothing the audience can relate to. Maybe it's an impossible situation and all you can do is

put New York or Paris in the background to create something that looks *real* to the audience. If it isn't real, it doesn't look real. In the case of *Cloud City* it's probably the most futuristic thing we've ever dealt with and because of that it does have a tendency to look a little artificial to the audience, and I don't think it's possible to completely overcome that. We experimented with the idea of using a model in some cases and in other cases used paintings and tried to soften it a bit by putting animation into it with ships flying around in the background and so on. I think that in terms of the paintings technically the work is very good —

Paul McQuarrie did most of them — but still can't overcome the basic problem of looking so unusual that when you look at them you say, *Gee, that must be a painting*."

I then asked why he and Lucas had chosen a British effects man, Brian Johnson, to supervise the effects on *Empire*. "Well, partly because Brian is an overall effects supervisor which meant he could also supervise the entire mechanical effects production team — we had much more in the way of production effects time — as well as the miniature effects unit. I thought that he was the best overall supervisor available with

mechanical effects experience and optical and miniature effects experience having worked in both fields. And it worked out very well."

Was there anything in particular that he'd done in the past that attracted you to his work? "Not really, it was just his approach to the various effects — he knew all the various techniques and knew how to use them well. He was able to get a tremendous amount of quality out of Space: 1999 without spending any real time doing the effects shots so he just seemed the right choice. And also from the personality point of view we get along very well with him. He's very easy to work with..."

What were some of the major effects problems during the making of *Empire*? For instance, how difficult were those full-scale Taun-tauns to manipulate? "They were quite difficult because they were all mechanical and were operating in 20 below zero weather... probably the single most difficult thing was the snow battle with the Walkers because we were integrating stop-motion animation with regular space ship animation, which is done with the motion control camera, as well as with live action..."

The animation of the models was very smooth. How come? "Well, we've introduced some new things in filming stop-motion which is part of our new com-

puter-controlled equipment. Some of it hasn't been registered yet so I can't really talk about it but part of it concerns moving the model itself."

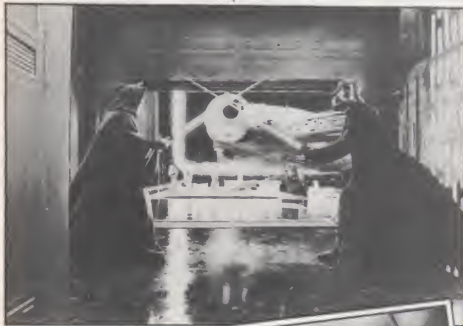
Is it, I wondered, a major breakthrough in model animation? An advance on what Ray Harryhausen has been doing all these years? "In a way, but part of it depends on the kind of creatures you're using, how the animation is done and the type of shot you're doing. I still don't think anyone has got to the point of that *real* break-through that allows you to completely overcome the problems of any jerkiness or the feeling that it's some-



how artificial."

I admitted that I considered the Ice World sequence to be the high-point of the movie and thought they should have formed the climax of the film. Kurtz naturally disagreed. "No, because the whole focus of the story is Luke's personal confrontation with Darth Vader. That *had* to be the end. It's true that if you were looking at this story from the conventional point of view and asking what is the best way to sell it to the audience then it wouldn't be structured the way it is. And that's part of the gamble we're taking, I admit. It would have been easier to just remake *Star Wars* and hope that the audience would come back and see it again — and probably a certain amount of them would — but the original concept was to tell a *continuing* story and to have it all fit together ultimately. It's possible that this film won't be as successful as it might have been if it had been just an imitation of *Star Wars* and in that sense *Empire* is a gamble. But we didn't want to get into the trap that the James Bond films did — making the same story over and over again while limiting the whole focus of the story to a few special effects. And because making a film like this takes up so much of your life you really have to do something that at least feels worthwhile otherwise it's a waste of time..."

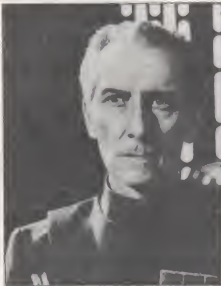
But was it wise to leave the audience with a cliff-hanger situation at the end of *Empire*? They now have to wait years to find out what happens next. "It isn't a true cliff-hanger in the sense of the Saturday morning serial where the car has just gone over the cliff but it is true that there are elements unresolved. A lot of people have brought up the point of Han Solo's predicament, saying that it should have been solved but if you think about the focus of this part of the *Star Wars* saga it's on *survival* not triumph. The theme of *Empire* is that for some people,



Top right: Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) and Darth Vader (Dave Prowse) in *Star Wars*. Top left: The Princess conceals a message tape inside Artoo-Detoo (Kenny Baker). Above: The first confrontation between good and evil — Obi-Wan Kenobi versus Darth Vader, *Star Wars*. Right: The second confrontation — Luke Skywalker versus Darth Vader. The *Empire Strikes Back* and so far, Vader leads two games to love in the first set!



Above: Garry Kurtz. Below left: A new face in the Star Wars saga, Billy Dee Williams, who plays Lando Calrissian. Below right: Guest villain in Star Wars and never seen again... Grand Moff Tarkin (Pater Cushing). Bottom: A preproduction painting by Ralph McQuarrie from Star Wars. An X-wing fighter navigates the Death Star Trench.



for some parts of their lives, just surviving, is enough of a triumph for the moment. And because of that and because Luke's feeling that he was ready to challenge Vader and then his realisation that he wasn't, and was also unable to save his friend — all those things are important to his emotional state at the end of the story. So if Han Solo's predicament had been resolved that element wouldn't have been there and you wouldn't have had that particular climax."

Yes, but perhaps younger members of the audience won't see it that way. They'll just be disappointed at the lack of an obvious climax. "Yes, that's true. Probably some of our younger audiences will be disappointed in a way about the ending but it's almost a *No Win* situation because you can't have it both ways. If you are telling a continuing story, as we are, then all the episodes have to fit together to form a cohesive piece and this episode, the middle act — *The Empire Strikes Back* — has to be a slower and more sombre piece in a way. Like the slow movement of a symphony. It spends the time to delineate the characters a little better, it explains some of the motivations and so on. You need that. It wouldn't work if you had three films that are exactly the same."

Perhaps not, if you were seeing all three pictures in one sitting but instead they are paced years apart and therefore I don't think the symphony analogy can be applied to them. Or do you intend, when you've finished the third episode, releasing them altogether in one big movie? "I suppose we will consider that ultimately. We haven't really talked about it too much but obviously that is a possibility somewhere along the line."

And what about the rumour that *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which is being made in England right now, is the third *Star Wars* movie?

"I can categorically deny that. It's not science fiction at all. It's a 1930s action-adventure type story about a search for lost treasure. A typical Clark Gable soldier-of-fortune kind of movie."

Will the third *Star Wars* movie also be made in England? "Yes. There are lots of reasons why. One is the production team we've built up over here — all the people who worked on the first two — we want to continue that. And we have the new sound stage we built at Elstree here, and two huge prop warehouses full of set pieces and props here in England..."

When does shooting begin and who will be directing it? "We haven't determined yet who will be the director but shooting will probably be in July or August of 1981, depending on when the screenplay is finished. At the moment George is working on a draft himself but whether he'll do the complete thing is still up in the air."

Garry Kurtz, thank you.

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While we await Stanley Kubrick's version of Stephen King's masterly novel, *The Shining*, with bated breath, old time Hollywood hand Stirling Silliphant presents his tv adaptation of the earlier King novel, *Salem's Lot*.

Funny, how images change . . . Since wrapping their four years of hard labour, Starksy and Hutch have quit the LAPD and the 430,000 dollar-an-hour environs of television for bigger budgetted fare. And quite independently of one another, they've both gone straight into the Gothic fantasy field.

In Canada, Paul Michael Glaser, unseen on the big screen since Fiddler on the Roof, has completed John Huston's Phobia chiller (due for a title change). In the quaint and necessarily remote Californian township of Ferndale, close to the Oregon border, his erstwhile cop partner, David Soul, has lowered guitar long enough to play budding novelist Ben Mears, in the 200-minute television mini-series of *Salem's Lot*.

What's this? Stephen King on television . . . ? Yes, the mind does rather boggle. Particularly if you're American. For US-tv, despite the padding between the incessant barrage of commercials, the King series is seen as an adult breakthrough. New areas of horror and vampirism are tapped for the first time, and the folks at Warner Brothers and CBS Television are feeling pretty chipper about it.

Although it's an improvement upon our resident ITV vampires, George and Mildred, I cannot see *Salem's Lot* creating too much of a stir here. It's the same vampiric mixture as before, and hinged too often to plagiarising other movies, other styles. From the best/worst of Hammer to undisguised touches of Romero and Friedkin — and a complete steal (if not two) from *The Master's Psycho*.

If the mini-series fails, I suppose the best that can be said for it is that it fails for the right reasons. Namely, adhering too closely to King's book. I appreciate how incongruous that must sound. Most reviewers usually complain when the opposite happens. From all American accounts, for example, Kubrick has dumped too much of King's *Shining*. Ironically, in this instance, the self-same production combine, Warner Brothers, have not ejected enough — in order to fulfill the usual requirements of a mini-series, which is as many guest-stars as possible (eleven), and drag the story out for as long as possible, with just enough



SALEM'S LOT

A STARBURST PREVIEW

by Tony Crawley

cliff-hangers to make sure the folks tune in again tomorrow or next week or whenever, when the commercials might really infiltrate their heads.

Stephen King is one of the few writers I read who is actually more verbose than I am. That's okay. In a book. His novels suffer from over-population. Far too many characters for an involving movie;

It takes forever to actually enter the old dark house at the core of this particular tale.

or even a mini-series. Keeping all, or nearly all of the *Salem's Lot* inhabitants (instead of combining three or four) simply slows up the yarn. We take forever, *but forever*, to actually enter the dark old house at the core of this particular tale. By the time we do get inside, we really couldn't care an owl's hoot about the innocent parties involved. We just want to get the effects show on the road and then raid the fridge again in

good time for M*A*S*H or Lou Grant.

Now the executive producer of *Salem's Lot* happens to be — pause, for winces — Stirling Silliphant. It's a pity about Stirling, one of my favourite men in L.A. He was really ace once upon an age. He scripted *Village of the Damned*, for heaven's sake. He won an Oscar for *In the Heat of the Night*. He toiled on a couple of other good movies that turned out to be box-office losers. Then, like the rest of us, he had his rent to pay. He slipped into the filmic manure otherwise known as Irwin Allen country. Silliphant went from the relative high of *The Towering Inferno* to the disastrous lows of *The Swarm* and *When Time Ran Out*.

As he told us, as far back as *Starburst* 4, Silliphant has been trying to film *Salem's Lot* for a long time. He wrote the first script, when it was due to be a movie. He was very pleased with it. "I'm really doing the most terrifying vampire picture ever made," he told me in 1975, "without showing a vampire or the teeth

and neck bit." How so then? "By utilising the other qualities taken on by people infected by vampirism. Levitation — up to a second or third storey window, for instance."

Well, the levitating, or at least the surprise face at a high window, remains in the tv version. But since Stirling turned producer and turned his scenario over to Paul Monash to re-adapt for the mini-series, the vampire and the teeth are back in ghoulish business — with a chap named Reggie Nalder doing a passable impression of Nosferatu, Max Schreck or Klaus Kinski's version, take your choice. Reggie's a real nightmare in black cloak, Howard Hughes fingernails, yellow eyes and teeth that surely must be infected with pyorrhea. If his teeth don't get you, his breath will blow you away.

I can understand (if not wholly appreciate) the corporate Hollywood thinking in having Paul Monash write the new script. He was the producer of tv's *Peyton Place* (even if he's not listed in *Leslie Halliwell's Teleguide!*), and with all the gossip, love affairs and restless teenagers around, there is much of the Peyton pace in the township called Salem's Lot. Monash, by the way is not all bad. He produced the *Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid* movie. He was first to snap up

"This is really not a picture about blood" — David Soul.

rights to *The Exorcist*. And best of all, he produced one of my all-time favourite sf movies, *Slaughterhouse Five*. The major difference being he didn't write any of those . . . and tragically, he seems to have fooled Silliphant into over-revering King's book, hence this similarly over-faithful, step-by-step, chapter-by-chapter (and even epilogue) rendition of it.

David Soul is happy enough with the result, however. "I'm not going to speak for everybody, but I certainly am a big fan of Stephen King," he told me over a Cannes brunch in May. "So it was great to play one of his characters. I also liked the elements involved. James Mason, obviously, plus the young director, Tobe Hooper. What was so good about *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was that it wasn't a graphic picture. It just carried you to the point of blood and moved on. It was built on tension and terror.

"I should hope the same could be said of *Salem's Lot*. This, too, is really not a picture about blood. It's a film that in a very strange kind of way is a correlation between what any society has to deal with in life. And that's the intrinsic evil in any community and those who wish to admit that it's there and those who want to ignore it.

"There are some who see the presence of this evil and try to do something about it — most of what they say, what my character says, falls on deaf ears! You see,



Above left: Barlow (Reggie Nalder), the vampire, recoils from a crucifix. Above right: School-teacher Susan Norton (Bonnie Bedelia) and Straker (James Mason) have a little chat! Below: The vampiric Danny Glick (Brad Savage) hovers outside his brother's bedroom window . . . two floors up!





Top left: Merk Petrie (Lance Kerwin) and Ben Mears (David Soul) stalk their vampire prey in the basement of the Marsten house. Top right: *The End* — or Ben Mears thinks as he stakes out Barlow (Reggie Nalder). Above: James Mason is his usual suave self as Straker, human side of Barlow the Vampire. Below left: Reggie Nalder, as Barlow, is less than overjoyed at the prospect of a stake through the heart. Below right: James Mason's real-life wife, Clarissa Kaya, plays the mother of the Glick boys, Danny and Ralphie, all of whom fall prey to the vampire.



Stephen King used the vampire as the device in what is, basically, the classic struggle of good and evil."

For the two of you out there who do not know the book, *Salem's Lot* is another example of Stephen King's suspicions — in tune with the Gnostics, Zoroastrians and Manicheans of the 16th Century — that the power of evil not only exists, my brethren, but is possibly even more pervasive in this world than the power of good. Certainly, Soul's character Ben Mears thinks so when returning to the New England resort village of Salem's Lot to tone up on local colour again, and write a book about an eerie hilltop mansion which has intrigued him since childhood. And not just him, either.

Most of the townfolk are much as he left them. Intimidated by the Marsten house. They have, in their guarded whispering, learned to live with it, and do not take kindly to out-of-season visitors, even an ex-local like Mears, nosing around. Interfering. Mears believes the old homestead could have been the House of Seven Gables in Salem, Massachusetts, where Judge Samuel Sewall ruled over the infamous witchcraft trials of 1692.

"You'll enjoy Mr Barlow," says James Mason, "and he'll enjoy you."

Mears is wrong about the house. Salem's Lot is not Salem, Massachusetts, and the evil that is most definitely within the mansion is of another brand, altogether. Transylvanian, one might say.

James Mason is the newest owner of the building. His Straker is about to open an antique shop, when his partner arrives. A certain Mr Barlow. "You'll enjoy Mr Barlow," Mason tells the locals. "And he'll enjoy you". Barlow may not be the usual anagram for Dracula, but that's who he turns out to be once delivered to Marsten House in a crate marked *Handle With Care*.

With jokes like these on-screen, no wonder David Soul can let fly with a pun as atrocious as: "I still get to stake out the baddies..."

Even before we see Straker, with his ever smiling deviosity, finding Barlow's special delivery crate torn asunder, pandemonium has begun hitting the fan down Salem way. In mid-gossip, or mid-affair, or indeed in mid-sloth, the community of folk — who could fill *Soap* for the next year — begin disappearing. Or simply winding up dead. Suddenly.

The fickle finger of fright is turned at David Soul. Everything was fine until he came poking about the place. He's the catalyst for all this death and destruction. No way, says the pure hero. "It's the Marsten house. It's like a beacon throwing off evil energy forces."

Well, of course, nobody's going to take the word of an outsider, particularly one

who looks like a Hollywood cop. Try as he will, and he does — aided by school-teacher Bonnie Bedelia, her father the local doctor (*Ed Flanders*) and the priest (*James Gallery*) — no one is very keen to stop and listen to his theorising about Barlow being a vampire and creating an army of living dead from the townsfolk he's knocking off as an *hors d'oeuvres* for a large massacre to come.

And so, at long—very long—last, David Soul begins to assert some authority around the decimated village and insists on checking out the Marsten spread. Young Lance Kerwin is already on his way. Having seen his folks wiped out by Barlow. The kid wants vengeance.

Soul's character is well-read for a writer, and by the time he's ready to assault the Marsten house, he's prepared for anything. One crucifix. Some holy water. And the inevitable wooden stake and heavy hammer. And so: exit Barlow.

Now this is where most of the vampire films come to an end. With Chris Lee, or some less than distinguished replacement, disappearing into dry bones and dust wafted away by the breeze, or the heavy breathing of his adversaries.

Not here . . . Barlow's number might be up, but not all the undead in town. And to stretch things out even further, when they are disposed of, there's still

the epilogue, set two years later in Guatemala, where David Soul and Lance Kerwin (who went from this to *The Boy Who Drank Too Much*, and I can understand why) have to take care of another piece of business. It's the schoolmarm, Bonnie Bedelia. Or what you might call stake and legs.

Yes, yes, I know, it's very easy to send up any of these kind of films. But only if they're not well made in the first place. If they make you suspend belief, no matter how many times you've seen a vampire movie, you applaud. If not, you tend to mock — and that, I'm afraid is what, in the end, *Salem's Lot* deserves. For all the (no doubt) excellent intentions it was made with, it fails. The reason is that Silliphant and Monash made one fatal error. They signed the wrong director. Tobe Hooper — and not George Romero.

On paper, and given his track record, Hooper sounded fair enough. On screen, he isn't. The fact that he's finally joined the Hollywood establishment with a big television number, simply draws attention — at times in cruel close-up — to his shortcomings. He's never directed for tv before. Romero has, and quite obviously doesn't wish to revert to his beginnings. When George goes the major studio route (if, indeed, he ever needs to) it'll be for a full-scale feature, or nothing at all.

I'm not suggesting Hooper has sold out; more than he was under the thumb of Silliphant and the Monash scenario. He's restricted by their telly-traditionalism, and not allowed to travel his own path. A surprising structure, when the line-producer was Richard Kobritz, who certainly gave John Carpenter his head on his great tv-movie, *Someone's Watching Me*.

The brothers Warner first wanted Romero as director. But at the same time, the company did not want a movie of *Salem's Lot*. Or perhaps, Kubrick didn't and threw his not inconsiderable weight around. Ironically, of course, Hooper's 200-minute tv series is now being released around most of the world as just that — a cinema feature. It's been doing extremely well in Australia. And cut to half its size, I can see it could be rather more powerful in cinemas. We're getting the full version, though.

But be warned, the marriage of King and Hooper is not good; and has already won an instant divorce. The performances of David Soul and Bonnie Bedelia are just about passable. The saviour of the piece is James Mason — who else? He steals the entire production — and also found room for his wife, Clarissa Kaye, as the vampirised mother of the unfortunate Glick lads. Minus Mason, I rather doubt *Salem's Lot* would be worth the viewing at all.

If you don't believe me, ask Stephen King. He's making all his future films with — but who else? — George A. Romero. 'Twill be most intriguing to see what they do with the population explosion of characters in *The Stand*. Cut them by half, I shouldn't wonder. Are you listening Paul Monash? Then again, do you care?

Salem's Lot (1979)

David Soul (as Ben Mears), James Mason (Straker), Lance Kerwin (Mark Petrie), Bonnie Bedelia (Susan Norton), Marie Windsor (Eva), Brad Savage (Danny Glick), Ronnie Scribner (Ralphie Glick), Barbara Babcock (June Petrie), James Gallery (Mr. Callahan), Joshua Bryant (Ted Petrie), Bonnie Bartlett (Ann Norton), Robert Lussier (Nolly), Ned Wilson (Henry Glick), Ernie Phillips (Royal Snow), Joe Brooks (Guard). Guest stars: Lew Ayres (Jason Burke), Julie Cobb (Bonnie Sawyer), Elisha Cook (Wessel), George Dzundza (Cully Sawyer), Ed Flanders (Dr. Bill Norton), Clarissa Kaye (Marjorie Glick), Geoffrey Lewis (Mike Ryerson), Barney McFadden (Ned Tobbert), Reggie Nalder (Barlow), Fred Willard (Larry Crockett) and Kenneth McMillan (Parkins Gillispie).

Directed by Tobe Hooper. Teleplay by Paul Monash from novel by Stephen King. Photographed by Jules Branner. Music by Harry Sukman. Production design by Mort Rabinowitz. Edited by Carroll Sax. Special effects by Frank Torro. Special Make-Up by Jack Young. Producer Richard Kobritz. Associate Producer Anna Cottle. Executive Producer Stirling Silliphant.

A Warner Brothers Television production for CBS-TV. 200 minutes (screened in two parts in America on November 17 and 24, 1979).



Above: Reggie Nalder, as Barlow the Nosferatu-style vampire of the sleepy township of Salem's Lot, gains the upper hand more than once. Here he shakes Mark Petrie (Lance Kerwin) warmly by the throat.

POPEYE

Tony Crawley reports on Robin (Mork) Williams' movie debut as . . . Popeye the Sailor-Man.

The curtain of total secrecy — a literal security-blanket, in fact — about the Popeye filming, currently over-scheduled in Malta, is finally beginning to lift. Just the odd smidgen half-inch or two. And we've got the first news . . . and the first colour rendition of Robin Williams morking his big screen starring debut as E.C. Sagar's muscular sailor-man.

He certainly doesn't much resemble Mork from Ork anymore. Will you look at those forearms . . .!

The film — a musical-comedy, it says here; script by Jules Feiffer, music from Harry Nilsson — ended up, just before shooting, as a combined Walt Disney and Paramount co-production. So is the new fantasy film, *The Dragon Slayer*. Many are the top Hollywood studios and film-makers now knocking on the Disney door for co-producing deals . . . since the Disney company is literally rolling in the greenstuff via the vast takings daily at Disneyland in California and Disneyworld in Florida.

Putting Popeye on film — with live-action, not animation — is the idea of the former Paramount production chief, Robert Evans. It's the sixth project for the sometime actor, disc-jockey and gents' clothier. He turned producer in his own right with the highly successful Polanski film, *Chinatown*, in 1974.

Since the comparative failure of his fourth film, *Players* — "not only a disappointment but a disaster on every level" — Bob Evans is in need of a hit. First report of Robin as Popeye seems to assure just that. Plus Evans' inspired choice of director, M*A*S*H and Nashville man, Robert Altman.

There is, in fact, as many Altman regulars in the movie as there are Italians helping to make it. The cinematographer is Fellini's favourite, Giuseppe Rotunno . . . Well, Italy is close to Malta. But why Malta, I hear you cry? Me, too.

The reason (not always so simple) is that the movie needed water and a village. Malta usually supplies water-sequences. The always-in-demand tank has been used in scores of British and American movies — *Warlords of Atlantis*, for example. This time, the little island country supplies everything, including housing for a cast and crew of almost 300 people.

Director Altman is a great believer in ensemble casting, and has his own semi-regular company of players that stay with him in most

of his movies. A goodly bunch of them are on hand in Malta.

Almost as inevitable casting as Williams in the lead role, is Shelley Duvall as Olive Oyl. In more than one review of her films (eight with Altman, alone), she has been referred to as an Olive lookalike. And while she was shooting Kubrick's version of Stephen King's *The Shining* with Jack Nicholson in London, Altman called her and told her: "I've got you the role you were born to play . . ." Shelley didn't have to ask which that was.

It was Altman's casting man who discovered Shelley for his Brewster McCloud film, in 1970. "How'd you like to be in a movie?" she was asked. "Oh, I'm not an actress," she replied. "Yes, you are . . . yes, you are." And now she is, with Cannes and other festival awards for films like *Three Women*, *Thieves Like Us*, *Nashville* and *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*. Once Popeye is in the can, she's kicking into her first venture as an associate producer, with her movie of *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*. A fun girl is Shell. She says she lives "in Beverly Hills or in the hills or on a hill in Beverly Hills."

The man we loved to hate in *Midnight Express*, Paul L. Smith, is the great casting for the bearded bully, Bluto — all 320 lbs and 6ft 4ins of him — not to mention his 22½ inch



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neck and size 12 shoes. Almost unknown to Hollywood until playing that sadistic Turkish jailer, Smith has spent 15 of the last 20 years filming in Israel, Spain, Germany, Italy and France — and of course, Malta before for *Midnight Express*. In Italy he made five thud 'n' blunder, knock 'em/shock 'em actioners about a gentle hero — and suggested the series' stunt man Robert Massino, from *Casablanca*, as Popeye's stunt co-ordinator.

"Actually, despite what people think, it was *Midnight Express* that got me the Bluto role," says Paul. "Bob Altman saw the trailers for those five action films . . . and Bob Evans fell for me after a clip of me carrying a horse!"

Paul Oooley, is Wimpy — he's as much a part of Altman's rep of strolling players as of Jules Feiffer. Altman saw him first in the off-Broadway version of Feiffer's play, *Hold Me*, and he also starred in Feiffer's *The White House Murder Case*. Before turning to acting, he'd wanted to be a cartoonist — and in fact, co-scripted his last Altman movie, *Health*.

But I nearly forgot Sweet'pea, the baby winning the hearts of Popeye, Olive Oyl, and yea verily, even the stone-cold heart of brutish Bluto. Sweet'pea is eight months old. Difficult to cast? Not for Altman. His grandson was born just at the right time and has been making a great impression — usually with a hammer in his hand — in the Malta shooting.

But centre of attraction on and off the film set, as he spends his tele-hiatus with the film break of his young life, is, naturally, Robin Williams. The man who introduced "shazbot" and "Na-no Na-no" to an estimated 55,000,000 people following each week of this spaced-out fast-paced Orkian philosopher, has conquered television since *Mork* and *Mindy* first aired in September, 1978. Last June, he conquered discs with his first comedy album, *Reality* . . . *What a Concept*, which has rapidly gone Platinum, as they say. He has furthermore conquered stage in such comedy clubs around LA as The Comedy Store, not to mention his New York gigs. And now he's all sat to take over movies. Bob Altman is entranced with the maniacal guy. So is Malta, which has not yet become a victim of Mork. Come Oscar night, 1980, or so they insist on Malta, there's one 'only favourite for the big award. As long as he keeps eating his spinach.

Robin, quite plainly, doesn't want the filming to stop. He's having a ball. In typical Altman fashion, the director has Robin's wife, dancer-choreographer Valerie Velardi, in a small role. And that's not just looking after the top star. Paul Smith's girl friend, actress Eve Knoller, is among the Swatheaven townspiece . . . so is MacIntyre Dixon's actress wife, and their young son. Altman believes a contented cast and crew is the best way to make a happy film. And from all reports, Popeye is looking not just good, but great. Now all Bob Evans has to do is persuade them to stop having a good time, quit shooting . . . and get off the island, before he has to buy the entire country.



Above: Paul Dooley, a regular performer with the Altman troupe, does an excellent impression of Wimpy, the hamburger king. Right: The man himself! Robin Williams in the title role . . . Popeye the Sailor-Man. Below right: A family portrait, Popeye (Robin Williams), baby Swee'pea (Wesley Ivan Hurt) and Olive Oyl (Shelley Duvall). Below: The villain of the piece, Bluto, is played (with panache) by Paul L. Smith.



THE FANTASTIC FILM

Few fans of fantasy films will deny that director Jack Arnold's contributions to the science fiction boom in the 1950s was considerable. Phil Edwards looks back over the director's career and examines the fantasy films that sprang from the Arnold stable.

To most fans of fantasy cinema, the 1950s represent a Golden Age when the boundaries of film-makers' imaginations were stretched to the limit — even if their budgets were not.

All the studios involved themselves in the profitable science-fiction boom, from the shoestring American International's *Angry Red Planet* to the gloss of MGM's *Forbidden Planet*, down to the dross of Monogram's *Flight to Mars*. In the thirties, Universal Pictures had initiated and led to the horror craze. In the fifties they contributed just as many monsters to the screen, usually on higher budgets and their "house style" was as distinctive as AIP's. They were also responsible for the one truly original creation of the period, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, a monster who has passed into movie mythology, as much an icon of the fantastic as *Frankenstein's Monster* or *Dracula*.

Looking back at the fifties' Universal films today, the one name which appears more than any other is that of director, Jack Arnold. A retrospective study of his fantasy films reveals that he held a unique

and consistent vision — that of Earth as an *alien* landscape — a familiar terrain where the impossible became the terrifyingly possible, where man met his adversaries and fantastic battles were fought and won in defence of his world.

Throughout his series of fantasy films, Arnold displayed a talent as a director of action and atmosphere which was unequalled by his colleagues in the science fiction/fantasy field.

Arnold began his film career during

Arnold displayed a talent as a director of action and atmosphere which was unequalled.

World War 2, working on documentaries with famed film-maker Robert Flaherty. He was later signed by Universal International as a contract director, so in some ways it was pure chance that brought Arnold to direct his first science fiction feature, *It Came from Outer Space*, in 1953.

Warner Brothers' 3D horror classic, *House of Wax*, had been a gigantic commercial success and other studios

A FASCINATING AL



THE IN
SHRINKI

A UNIVERSAL INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTION

GRANT WILLIAMS

with APRIL KENT · PAUL LANGTON

DIRECTED BY JACK ARNOLD · COSTUME DESIGNER RICHARD M...



IS OF JACK ARNOLD

ADVENTURE INTO
THE UNKNOWN!



INCREDIBLE

ING MAN

PICTURE STARRING

6 · RANDY STUART

TON · RAYMOND BAILEY

MATHESON

ALBERT ZUGSMITH

were quick to realise the popularity of the revived process. Universal thought that its first entry in the sf sweepstakes should be in 3D.

It Came from Outer Space, based on a story by Ray Bradbury and scripted by Harry Essex, was produced by William Alland, who would work with Arnold again on several of the Arnold fantasy features.

It Came from Outer Space was also a direct result of the success of Pal's Destination Moon and Wise's Day the Earth Stood Still. Set in a desert township, the film was the first feature in which Arnold used the desert location as a pivotal part of the plot as well as a reflection of the actions of the characters.

The Creature from the Black Lagoon is a dark, swirling dreamworld of nightmarish imagery.

virtually using the *locale* as a character itself. In his story of an accidental alien invasion, Arnold used carefully integrated location shooting with skillfully designed studio sets. One of these sets, a desert highway stretching into the distance, was only a few yards deep, the remainder being a perspective built model.

Certain plot elements in which the aliens create cold, unemotional duplicates of the townspeople pre-date a similar idea

in the 1956 Don Siegel thriller, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. In the later film, the theme was carried to its logical and horrifying conclusion. It Came from Outer Space proved a great success both critically and commercially and also influenced many other science fiction films. Resonances can easily be detected in *Close Encounters*, twenty-five years later.

Following the success of It Came from Outer Space, it was only natural that Universal should turn to the same creative team for a follow-up. The script for *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* was written by Harry Essex and Arthur Ross with uncredited contributions by Arnold. Universal were keen to create a new monster for their famous horror gallery and the resultant Gill Man was a horrific half man/half fish creation from the brilliant make-up artist, Bud Westmore. The two costumes (one worn by Ben Chapman for the land-based scenes, the other for Ricou Browning in the underwater footage), cost 12,000 dollars of the film's healthy 800,000 dollar budget and were constructed from a special foam rubber.

The Creature from the Black Lagoon is a dark, swirling dreamworld of nightmarish imagery and echoes of it can be found in Spielberg's 1974 classic, *Jaws*. Once again, the 3D process was used to great effect and even at revivals in 1978

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OUTER
SPACE**

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great science fiction story!

Starring

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with **CHARLES DRAKE · RUSSELL JOHNSON**
KATHLEEN HUGHES · JOE SAWYER

Directed by JACK ARONOLD - Screenplay by HARRY ESSRY - Produced by WILSON BYRON - A MURDOCK INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTION

the film managed to draw gasps of wonder from audiences seeing it in 3D for the first time. Of all the fifties monster creations, the Creature is perhaps the most sympathetic and memorable and the film remains a genuine sf horror classic. Released in March 1957 *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* was a smash success and a sequel went into production later the same year, *The Revenge of the Creature*. Once again, Universal turned to their fantasy specialist, Jack Arnold, to helm the project. Feeling he had exploited the values of the atmospheric

Black Lagoon setting to its fullest, Arnold rapidly moved the locale of the story to the Seaquarium in Florida and placed the Gill Man against an urban backdrop. The Gill Man became even more sympathetic with Martin Berkeley's screenplay showing the Creature's captors to be cruel and exploitive of their prisoner. Also filmed in 3D, the sequel contains considerably more physical violence than the original, though much of the original movie's atmosphere and menace is missing.

A further sequel was filmed in 1957

but Arnold turned down the project, feeling he had wrung all he could from the formula. *The Creature Walks Among Us* was little more than a Fifties formula monster action programmer and in the closing scenes, the Creature was finally put to rest once and for all.

The 1955 *Tarantula* was a return to the desert landscape of *It Came from Outer Space*. The script by Martin Berkeley was based on a television play that Arnold had directed some years before. The story concerns a scientist (Leo G. Carroll) experimenting with



Above: This illuminated hoarding was erected outside the London Pavilion for the opening night of *It Came from Outer Space* in 1953. Above right: Scott Carey (Grant Williams), otherwise known as *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957), tries to escape from a box of rags in his own basement. Right: A fine example of the desert landscape that Arnold seemed to love so much, Richard Carlson indicates the effects of the alien's passing in *It Came from Outer Space*. Below: The Creature exacts his revenge in the 1954 movie *Revenge of the Creature*. Opposite: The poster for *It Came from Outer Space*.





Far left: A gallery of scenes from the *Creature* movies. The *Creature* (top) stealthily boards the expedition river boat. (Centre) The *Creature* in chains at the Florida Seaquarium in *Revenge of the Creature* (1954). (Bottom) Director Jack Arnold (right) prepares to film a scene with Ben Chapman as the *Creature* in *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1953). Above: Arnold directed the *Metaluna* sequence in the 1955 classic *This Island, Earth*. Here the alien Exeter (Jeff Morrow) welcomes his Earthly guests, Cal Hecchem (Rex Reason) and Ruth Adams (Faith Domergue), to *Metaluna*. Left: The Australian "daybill" poster for *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Below: *Monster on the Campus* was one of Arnold's lesser offerings.



animal nutrients in an effort to ease the impending world food shortage. The experiments go drastically wrong and the result is an ever-enlarging Tarantula which terrorises a desert township and local ranches. It finally meets its match when the US Air Force is called in and a squadron of Starfighters, led by a youthful Clint Eastwood, napalm it out of existence.

The film is directed with Arnold's usual skill and special effects by Clifford Stine contain some truly remarkable scenes, the giant spider destroying Leo G. Carroll's house being one noteworthy example. Once again make-up wizard Bud Westmore created a horrifying monster in the form of Carroll's scientist suffering from acromegalia.

Tarantula is perhaps Arnold's most



effective feature utilising the desert he loves so much and the film contains his most direct statement about Earth's alien nature.

Though Joseph Newman is credited with directing the 1955 feature, *This Island, Earth*, it is now generally accepted that approximately half of the film was shot by Arnold. Arnold was responsible for the *Metaluna* sequences, showing his

familiar style of fast action and dynamic editing. It is a great pity that the entire film had not been handled by Arnold.

Arnold's unquestioned masterpiece, *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, was shot in 1957. Working from his own novel, screenwriter Richard Matheson turned in a highly literate script.

The film tells of the adventures of

Scott Carey (*Grant Williams*) who, through a combination of circumstances, finds himself beginning to shrink.

Trapped in the cellar of his own home, the two-inch tall Carey battles a number of dangers — floods, famine, and in one terrifying *tour de force* of special effects, a monstrous spider. Through the technical genius of Clifford Stine, Arnold gave

The Incredible Shrinking Man a momentum and narrative drive unique within the fantasy genre.

Also in 1957, Arnold wrote the original story for John Sherwood's *The Monolith Monsters*. Another return to the desert for Arnold where, with the help of strange meteors, the Earth itself becomes the menace with giant pillars of rock rising and falling, causing destruction and death by draining the silicon from humans and turning them to stone. An Earthly mineral, salt, finally puts a stop to the strangest and most original alien invaders yet conceived by the movies.

Arnold's last film for Universal, the 1958 *Monster on the Campus*, told the story of a college professor played by B movie veteran Arthur Franz who finds himself infected by a prehistoric fish and turns into a ravaging Neanderthal monster. The film was little more than a programmer and came at a time when the studios were making youth-oriented films, so the viewers are treated to more than their fair share of screaming co-eds.

For his next fantasy movie, *The Space Children* (1958), Arnold moved to Paramount, though the feature was produced by his old partner, William Alland.

Sadly, *The Space Children*, despite a serious central theme of nuclear warning, is not a particularly memorable film. The beaches, desolate and forbidding as they are in the film, are no substitute for the desert landscapes of Arnold's previous films and the film exudes a flat and juvenile atmosphere.

In late 1958 Jack Arnold came to England to direct what is reputedly his own favourite film, *The Mouse that Roared*. A whimsical story of a small, mythical European country that declares war on the USA, the film is best remembered today as an early vehicle for Peter Sellers to indulge himself in a triple characterisation.

Arnold's final foray into the fantastic is perhaps best forgotten. The 1969 comedy, *Hello Down There*, told a trite tale of a family who decide to live at the bottom of a swimming pool. The film featured 70s superstar Richard Dreyfuss in an early role.

And so it seemed that Arnold turned his back on the area of film-making that suited his talents best. During the time he was making his sf movies, Arnold was also active directing other films for Universal, ranging from Westerns to teenage drive-in fodder.

In recent years, Arnold has been producing and directing various television shows, *The Brady Bunch* and *Nancy Drew* being just two examples. He is a popular guest at fantasy conventions in America where he is only too pleased to recount the stories behind the making of the various fantasy films he was involved in over the years.



Top: One of the most memorable sequences of the film *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) — two-inch-high Scott Carey (Grant Williams) versus a tarantula spider. Above: A terrifying game of Cat and Mouse — with Carey (Grant Williams) as the prey. Right: An outsized world holds a million dangers for a two-inch man.



THE STAR WARS INTERVIEWS: PART FOUR

IRVIN KERSHNER

JOHN BROSNIAN TALKS TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.

When I first heard that Irvin Kershner would be directing *The Empire Strikes Back* I was surprised as there was nothing in his previous film career to indicate that he would be a likely choice to direct the sequel to *Star Wars*. He made his directing debut with *Stakeout* on Dope Street in 1958, a low-budget thriller about three youths who find some missing heroin and then have to cope with the gangsters who lost it, and since then has made such movies as *The Hoodlum Priest* (1961), *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1964), *A Fine Madness* (1966), *The Flim Flam Man* (1967), *S.P.Y.S.* (1974) and *The Eyes of Laura Mars* (1979).

As most of his films have been small-scale ones that have usually centred on some sort of social outcast who is rebelling against the system (Sean Connery as the angry poet in *A Fine Madness*, for instance, and George C. Scott as the wily con man in *The Flim Flam Man*). I asked Kershner what attracted him to a big-scale fantasy like *The Empire Strikes Back*...

"Well, the people in *Empire* are certainly rebellious," he said with a smile, "but what really attracted me was the fairy tale aspect of the story. I never saw it as a profound story about the human condition — that's not the purpose of this sort of film. I liked very much the idea of doing something that children would respond to and which would give them a very direct experience. And I think *Empire* does this.

"I really don't think that film is more successful when it's in a *thinking* form, I think that it's when it's an *emotional* experience that film really counts as a medium. You can certainly have profound visions but they're rarely due to what the characters *say* in a film, they're usually the result of the relationships that are set up between what you see and what is said and the metaphor that is implied. It goes beyond simply just the words. I see many films where the makers have prided themselves on having something to say but I find that usually they're pretentious. The biggest problem with *Empire* was to make it non-pretentious yet have someone like Yoda who could express some very basic philosophy."

I asked if he'd been particularly impressed with *Star Wars*. "Yes, I was. I saw it with my 10 year-old son and I was more impressed with his reaction than I was with my own. I liked it but I had no idea it would affect someone as much as it did my son and the other kids in the audience. And that's when I began to analyse it — I went back to see it again and realised there was a great deal in it



Photo by Joyce Agee

and that it was a different kind of picture, a *new* kind. And when I was asked to do *Empire* I had certain fears about it. Did I really want to make the follow-up to what is, in terms of money, the most successful film ever made? Would I be able to live up to it? But at the same time I wanted to have the experience of making it because I wanted to know more about special effects and I knew it would be both a learning experience and a challenge. So when I discussed it with George Lucas I said I'd like to make a film that looked better than *Star Wars*, had more elegance and style and a story that was a bit more complicated. By "complicated" I don't mean cryptic but with more depth. Anyway, he agreed and I tried to do that. And *Empire* is the result."

Kershner had known Lucas and Gary Kurtz for a number of years before this but, he insists, only on a general basis. "I knew them from school, from USC (University of Southern California) where I took courses and also taught. Through the years I occasionally saw George and Kurtz but we weren't really close friends..."

The fantasy and screen writer Leigh Brackett, who'd written the screenplays for such movies as *The Big Sleep* and *Rio Lobo*, had been commissioned by Lucas to write the script for *Empire* based on his original story. "She was halfway through the script when I became involved," said Kershner, "and we decided to just let her finish the thing before getting into meetings with her about the rewrite — because I knew I'd want to rewrite. So while I waited I had discussions with George and some of the art people who were starting on the initial

drawings, just sort of slowly getting started. And when she handed in the first draft she said she was going into hospital that weekend for a check-up — and she never came out.

"So suddenly we had a first-draft screen-play in our hands and a definite start date for the picture on March 5th, 1979, which meant we had to get moving.

So we took the script and started reading it and talking about it and making a few changes — then George said, 'You know, we've got to bring in a writer. Someone who is strong on dialogue and who can take on the burden of getting it whipped into shape.' So we brought in Larry Kasdan and for months we would meet in my apartment in Los Angeles and go over

it section by section. He would go off and rewrite a section for a few days or a week then come back and we'd go over the pages he'd done, then he'd do another section. We did a very extensive rewrite but it was still basically her script.

"When we'd polished it to the point that I thought was now workable I came over to London and began preproduction which for the first few months consisted of making drawings. I visualised and drew up the whole film to create the flow of it, to get the feel of the sets and the actual staging of the scenes and even the cutting. It had to be very precise — so precise that as the drawings were made the art director began to make the sets. Then as we began to incorporate how the special effects would be done I had to keep altering the drawings accordingly.

"It took about 6 months producing these drawings — we ended with a book a foot thick. I sent copies to George and to all the technicians so everyone knew what they would be doing. With the aid of this book it was possible to get the *flow* of the picture established, which was the most important thing of all. Because as soon as you have a picture with a lot of gadgetry, blue screens, matte shots, super-



Opposite and below: Empire director Irvin Kershner.
Above: Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and Yoda (Frank Oz) meet for the first time amid the swamps of the Dagobah jungle planet.



Photo by Joyce Agee



impositions, etc. it tends to become very stiff if you're not careful. The actors become as stiff as the gadgets themselves . . ."

"That was a major problem because the whole picture is special effects. People don't realise that almost every shot has something in it that's a special effect, and about half the effects were done completely on the set. Yoda, for instance, was a total special effect and all done on the set. We added nothing to him later. Then there were the mechanical effects like the water effects and the fogs — there

were so many things that we created right there . . . but, of course there were many shots where I would shoot the live action and then send the scene back to the studio in San Francisco for the opticals to be added. It was really a locked down situation on many of those shots. I mean, there were shots where we had to use the Vista-vision camera, it had to be exactly 4½ feet off the ground, it had to be pointed no more than 15 degrees up, the light had to come from the right, it had to be orange — all because of the special effects that would be added later — and then I could be as free as I wanted within that frame.

"Then we reached the point wherein some shots all I had was a completely black set and a few actors. It looked silly — nothing but a couple of lines drawn on the floor for the actors and that was it. I wouldn't see the finished scene for maybe 6 months after I shot it, then I get back a piece of film that's been married and the whole thing comes to life — it has a background and something flying around and other moving elements. It was a similar situation with some of the snow battle scenes — all I had were some men running towards me, smoke bombs, a few explo-

sions and one man stumbling and falling in the foreground. And then the special effects team start working on it — they put in the three huge Walkers, which was a remarkable job, and then later they put in the laser blasts coming out of the Walkers, one of which hits the man I'd had fall over months ago . . . so it was all working backwards."

I asked if Yoda had been in George Lucas's original outline or had been added at a later stage. "No, Yoda was in the original story but we didn't know exactly how he'd look. It was a long process of discovery, first with a few sketches, then bigger drawings and then the sculpture started . . . and changed again and again. We found we needed a different shaped head because we couldn't get all the mechanism in, and there was a lot of mechanism. The eyes had to be spring-loaded and moved independently. They even focussed. When Yoda was talking to someone close the eyes actually focussed in — and his left eye would droop slightly when he was sad. And the ears and the mouth had to be coordinated, so with all that we had a lot of machinery to pack into the head."

Wouldn't it have been simpler to use a midget wearing a mask? "No, because



you put a mask on a midget and you've got a mask on a bad actor. But with Yoda I had total control and to me directing the character of Yoda was the most important part of directing in the whole picture. I had *total* control — I could make his cheek twitch, his ears droop and so on. Show me a midget who's so great an actor that he can actually manipulate all that.



"Actually there's very little of Yoda in the picture and his scenes only took about 10 days of shooting, but they were very long days. He was monstrously difficult to work with and on average it took us about 3½ hours to shoot just 2 lines of dialogue. The rehearsals took a lot of time because we had a bank of tv monitors and 3 technicians, sometimes 4, to manipulate Yoda. Frank Oz was coordinating it with me and we were both wearing earphones and mikes. The set was built 4 or 5 feet above the floor so that we could have all kinds of mechanisms underneath Yoda . . . and it took endless rehearsals because you'd start and one of Yoda's eyes would go in the wrong direction or one ear would suddenly fall down, and I'd have to say, 'Up with the left ear,' or, 'Now take the left eye and move it around to the right. . . that's right, now focus it a little closer.'"

"Frank Oz would be watching the tv

screens and I'd be watching both the screens and the creature but we were the only ones who could hear what Yoda was saying. The crew and Mark Hamill heard *nothing* — they didn't know what was happening. Finally we had to put a little earphone on Mark — a tiny, miniature earphone with a very fine wire going back behind his ear so that he could hear and react to Yoda. Oh, it was terribly difficult but the satisfying thing was that when we saw the rushes — after putting rough dialogue on them — we could see that it was working perfectly. I didn't have to reshoot any of the Yoda scenes, which was quite amazing.

"But the whole film was difficult. I mean, the crew were falling apart near the end. It was six months of solid shooting. I was working 7 days a week and many of the crew were working 7 days a week. The set building continued on weekends and the filming went on nights, some-

times around the clock. We had *fifty four* sets which is astronomical. I'd pull out of one set and move across to the next one and they'd be ripping down the first set and building another one in its place by the next day. We had every carpenter and fitter available in the British film industry working on the sets. We'd have hired more people if there'd been anymore . . .

"It took two years and two months of my life to make *Empire* and I don't regret a moment of it but it took over my life completely. You had to believe in every single thing you were doing because you were dealing with incredible subject matter. And I took it completely seriously — I *believed* in the characters. That's why I tried to direct some of the actors, like Peter Mayhew and David Prowse, only when they had the full costume on. It was only when everything was in place that I could start to deal with them. Then I could look into the face of say, Darth Vader and deal with him as Darth Vader, not David Prowse. It was the same with See-Threepio. If Tony Daniels was just sitting in a chair talking to me then he wasn't See-Threepio. During the making of the film I only related to See-Threepio, not the actor. And I dealt with Artoo as Artoo. I would command him to do things as if he was really a robot. 'Come over here, Artoo!' And he'd roll over to me and come to a stop and I'd say, 'Now I don't want any shaking or jiggling. I just want you to look to the left and then to the right and then just look straight ahead afterwards — nothing else!' And I would never call Peter Mayhew 'Peter' on the set, I always called him Chewy. It would be, 'Chewy, come over here! I want you to sit there then leap up and run to the rear!' And he would get up, stumble, kick over lights because he was a really big creature, especially in small sets like the cockpit one. But he was always known as 'Chewy' to me. . . ."

And what about *Star Wars* Number 3, or Episode 6 as it's officially known — will he be directing it? "No, I wouldn't do the next one. When I started *Empire* I said to George, 'Why aren't you doing it?' And he said, 'There's no way to explain to you now but by the time you finish the picture you'll know why.' And he was right. When I finished, after all those months, I said to myself, 'This is it!' And I said to George, 'You were absolutely right. One is enough. It was fun and a challenge. But two in a row would be impossible!'"

But Irvin Kershner hasn't finished with science fiction completely. His next movie is going to be *I, Robot* based on the famous robot stories of Isaac Asimov and from a screenplay by Harlan Ellison. It looks as if Mr Kershner is going to be ordering robots around film sets for some time to come.

Photo by Joyce Agee



Opposite above: The 800-year old Jedi Master, Yoda. Opposite below: Young Luke Skywalker is amazed after Yoda demonstrates the power of the Force and levitates an X-Wing fighter from the bottom of a swamp. Above: Director Irvin Kershner. Below: "I would never call Peter Mayhew 'Peter' on the set, I always called him Chewie." — Irvin Kershner.



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To be eligible for the 1980 Awards, the film or tv show must have gone on general release between January 1st 1979 and June 30th 1980. That is an

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Another change from the last Awards is that we have decided to include fewer categories. This is an attempt on our part to alleviate the confusion that last year's twenty categories caused.

After much debate we decided

to add one new category: that of *Best Fantasy Book*. When voting for this category, please bear in mind that the book needn't be a film book to qualify. But it must be fantasy orientated and it must have been issued in Britain for the first time between January 1st 1979 and June 30th 1980.

If you are reluctant to cut up your copy of *Starburst*, then a copy of this page will be sufficient. Please get your votes to us as quickly as possible.

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- Best Actor.....
- Best Actress.....
- Best Director.....
- Best Script.....
- Best Special Effects.....

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- Best Actor.....
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'You'll believe a man can fly' proclaimed the publicity for the film of Superman. "If the audience doesn't believe that Superman can fly, then we don't have a film" confessed Richard Donner, the director, just before it opened. The enormous production had taken over forty million dollars and two years to make, and at the time was the most expensive show on Earth. The film was a critical and commercial success, and how Superman flew has remained a secret until this day. All the people involved in its making were not allowed to say a word about it. Superman himself, Christopher Reeve, refused to be drawn. Now as the sequel, *Superman II* is only months away, one of the men responsible for the unique quality of the flying sequences is free to explain how they are done. He is Zoran Perisic, a special effects cameraman and owner of the Zoptic process, which he developed for the purpose of Superman-powered flight.

A year and a half into the production of the Superman film, Zoran Perisic approached the producers with his fledgling process, and although they had already invested in conventional methods of making their hero fly, using wires and travelling matte photography, they became interested in augmenting these effects with what Perisic could offer. They told him that if his Zoptic process could pass a test, and that if his equipment could be ready in six weeks, then the job was his. It did, it was, and the rest you know... except how it was done.

At the end of shooting on *Superman II*, I went onto the large "A" stage at Pinewood Studios, England, where the flying unit alone had been working for nine and a half months, to see a demonstration of the Zoptic process. Zoran Perisic, a shy and diffident speaker, pointed to the largest front projection screen I have ever seen, pearl grey in colour, curved, of rigid construction, thirty feet tall and ninety feet long. It filled a wall of the stage, and opposite it was a very unusual camera suspended by a telescopic arm from the lighting grid, and resting on a tall, expansive rostrum. Before the demonstration, he explained how he had got the idea. From Yugoslavia, he came to England as a freelance cameraman in 1963 and worked on the film *2001 A Space Odyssey*.

"Although I was rostrum cameraman on *2001*, I became aware on that picture of the problems of showing space vehicles flying convincingly *in depth*... It was almost impossible to achieve a separation between the flying object and the background. In fact in *2001* this was achieved by the laborious method of hand-painted mattes. However, one thing I learned on that film from Stanley Kubrick, the director, is that any idea is worth trying no matter how crazy it may seem. That is why years later when I opened my own

HOW SUPER BY ZORAN

After over two years of utter secrecy, Zoran Perisic, whose Zoptic Process contributed so much to the flying sequences in *Superman The Movie*, has decided to reveal

small studio, I decided to experiment with a hunch I had. This became the Zoptic process". I strained my imagination to see Superman aloft as he technically explained how it worked.

"I reckoned that it was possible to make an object appear to move in depth,

to 'fly' towards or away from the camera, while its real position in relation to the camera remained unchanged. This could be achieved by projecting the background through a zoom lens, and rephotographing the background with an object placed before it, with a matching zoom



Above: Zoran Perisic proudly displays the British Academy of Film and Television Arts award and the Oscar he received for his part in making Superman fly. Opposite: Some examples of an airborne Christopher Reeve as Superman from the film of the same name.

MAN FLIES

PERISIC

just how he helped fool audiences into believing a man can fly. Nicholas Leahy journeyed to Pinewood film studios at the invitation of Perisic to attend a special demonstration.

lens on the camera. The two zoom lenses are interlocked either electronically or mechanically, with matching focal lengths so that their focal lengths change together".

There was an illuminated model of a space ship, fixed on a rigid pole-arm,

stuck through the middle of the projection screen, as we made our way up onto the rostrum. The pole is aligned so that the space ship masks it from the camera's eye, and at the end of the pole-arm there is a knuckle joint, so that the space ship can be made to pitch, yaw, or rotate, as



necessary. A close look at the projector-camera unit itself, known as *the rig*, on the rostrum established the proximity of the two zoom lenses, with the projection film of the background, known as *the plate*, threaded underneath. Suspended from the ceiling by the telescopic arm and counterweighted, Perisic could move the machine with the greatest of ease. The camera and projector are extremely light. One reason why is a specially designed lamphouse for the projector, making a heavy xenon arc light unnecessary. "The most important advantage of this new rig", he said, "is the three-axis movement of the camera. Pan, tilt and rotation all coincide at one point in the camera lens. Panning and rotations can make complete 360 degree turns, and the tilting allows for 180 degree movements. The rig can be raised and lowered on the telescopic arm, and the rostrum allows for a twenty feet side to side tracking movement. The size of the stage means that the rig can be tracked back to one hundred and ten feet from the screen. The rig can be operated in three ways, manually, by remote control, and by feeding either of those procedures into a computer. A small video camera mounted in the viewfinder gives instant test results on the television monitor screens". Perisic and his small crew took their seats behind the control desks at the rear of the rostrum, and the demonstration began.

"When the projector is screening a large picture, its lens is on a short focal length", he said. "The camera lens is on the same focal length to photograph the whole of the projected picture. So the size of the object in front of the screen will appear small in the viewfinder. When the projector is screening a small picture, its lens is a long focal length. The camera lens follows the same zoom change to embrace the smaller picture. Through the viewfinder, the picture appears unchanged, but the object in front of it seems bigger, and appears to have travelled towards the camera. An automatic iris has to be used on the projector lens to compensate for the changes in the brightness of the picture".

Just to be awkward, he demonstrated the reverse, the space ship flying away from the camera. All the working lights on the stage were turned off. Perisic said "Action". A small aerial picture of The Arctic wastes, filmed by helicopter, flashed up on the screen behind the model. The picture zoomed rapidly bigger to fill most of the screen, while to my eyes the model just turned a little inwards on its pole and remained the same size. But on the monitors, in the same rectangle images as the Panavision big screen, the ship turned and grew smaller, diminishing rapidly into and across the landscape, "flying through the mountains". Deluded by a game of perspective, the visual effect was acrobatic, exhilarating.

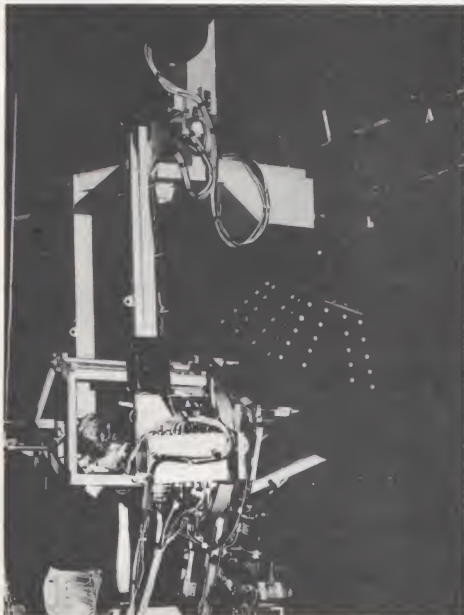
rating and impressive. With the stage lights on again, we watched the video recording of the take once more.

Now how does Superman do it? A fibreglass mould of Christopher Reeve's torso was made, and attached to the pole-arm. The actor is carried to the pole-arm by a tall, moving gantry, and placed in the mould. Sometimes the shot makes it necessary for him to wear the mould under his costume. He is fanned by a wind machine in a pit in front of the screen to simulate the stream of air, and to make his cape look good. Suspended in mid-air, Superman has become that stationary object in front of the screen. But using exactly the same process in as many ingenious ways as possible, he can be made to take off from the ground at incredible speed, float around the top of The Statue Of Liberty, chase a rocket,

circle the Earth, and fly along the stars.

One of the technicians on the crew paid Christopher Reeve a compliment well worth hearing. Speaking of the actor, he said: "Nobody else can fly. When you put stand-ins and stunt men in that mould, they look nothing. They just lie there. When he gets up there, he flies. You believe he can fly, because he believes it. He's prepared himself in his own mind because he's an actor. No matter how long the shot takes, he's so patient. It's really hot and uncomfortable up in that thing. He's amazing, that guy".

Not all of the flying shots involved the Zoptic process. When Superman touches down or takes off from a fully built studio set, this is usually done with a harness and wires. Such scenes often occur at night to help the illusion. Traditional methods, such as models,

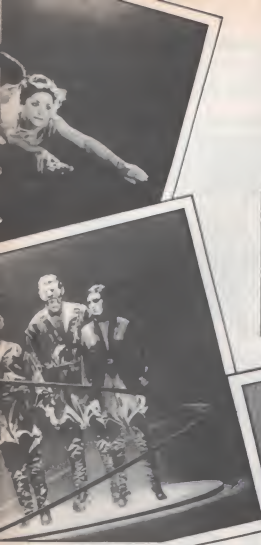


Above: The impressive-looking Zoptic equipment with a technician at the controls. Opposite: A selection of examples of a flying Superman, the three villains who return in the sequel to menace the Man of Steel, and crowd reactions to Superman's Metropolis debut.



matte and optical effects, were used with such great skill that the late Les Bowie, (matte expert), Derek Meddings (director of model effects), Roy Field (director of special optical effects), Colin Chilvers (special effects supervisor), Denys Coop (director of photography for flying effects), and Zoran Perisic for the Zoptic Process, all collectively won a British Academy of Film And Television Arts award and an Oscar in 1979 'for special achievement' in making Superman fly.

In a viewing theatre in the studio, Perisic explained the process in more detail, before screening some flying scenes from Superman and Superman II. "I had done a test for Superman at the very beginning, long before Richard Donner came on the picture", he said. "For some reason very few people appear to have seen that test. But it had been rejected at that time because some people felt although it worked well with spherical lenses, it could not be made to work in Panavision, which is what Superman was being shot in. When I was hired, they reckoned I would be needed for ten weeks. Having completed Superman II, I have worked flat out on the project for three years. On the first one, everything was make-shift. There simply wasn't the time to develop the hardware and have



which case if one shoots something differently from the other one, you are apt to say, 'The other fellow's wrong. I'm right'. Although we looked at other people's takes before shooting something ourselves, the only liaison was the editor."

By inverting the rig, Superman can seem to enter the shot flying on his back. If the upright rig pans to the right past him on the pole-arm while at the same time zooming to a smaller picture, when the result is shown in a cinema there is no way to detect that the picture has diminished, so Superman will seem to grow larger as he flies towards the camera and then out of shot screen left. By tilting the rig and zooming at the same time, the picture can be moved around Superman, so that he seems to steer himself into, around, and away from the background. In fact, with the new equip-

ment, now he can do anything he pleases. Perisic says "The trick of the thing is to get the two zooms working together. You can't get it nearly right. They're either exactly right, or it doesn't work at all".

Rushes from Superman and Superman II were then projected in a darkened theatre, to the recorded sound of John Williams' 'flying' music from the film. Even though I knew the secret, to me Superman still flew with all his dynamic power. Still invulnerable to gravity and special effects men. But not quite. On one take, as he flew through the sky with that frown of purpose we know so well, someone lowered into shot beside him a stuffed buzzard on wires. Superman laughed for a moment, and then cheerfully punched it away with a super-powerful fist. No revelation can ever knock his image out of the sky.

it built. Now we have done that, we are able to achieve effects that simply would not have been possible on Number One. Now we have a lighter, more flexible rig, a larger, curved screen instead of the original flat one, and the lenses are a great improvement. Then we only had zooms of a 5:1 ratio. Now we have 10:1. Before the plates were shot on 35mm anamorphic, this time they have been shot and projected on the VistaVision format". He promised a scene with five people flying on the screen at the same time. "There are an enormous number of plugs behind the screen, so that we can move the pole-arm wherever we want, so of course we can use more than one and reseal the screen material over the holes afterwards. The closer Superman is to the screen the better, usually about ten feet, so there is less of his shadow to mask in behind him. We never used a plate that ran for more than a minute, and then we were undercranking the camera to slow things up, or else we could never get through all the instructions in time. The producers liked us to get in at least two shots a day. Sometimes continuity was a problem. With three crews working at once, the live action unit, the model unit and the flying unit, sometimes one unit got to a sequence before another one. In



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BOOK WORLD

This month, *Starburst* presents the first in a new series of columns on the world of book publishing by newcomer, John Bowles.

This year, 1980, is a crisis year in British book publishing. Every week, it seems, brings news of further redundancies here, additional cut-backs there. Publishers gather together and talk pessimistically of the end of the book as we know it. Yet, despite all the doom and gloom, large numbers of new books do somehow still manage to appear. In this column I'll be trying to review the most interesting of them, as well as keeping you informed of the latest news in the sf/fantasy/horror publishing world.

Two new horror novels arrived on my desk this month, each the sort of sure-fire commercial success guaranteed to raise a smile from the most miserable publisher. They are *The Dark* (*New English Library*, £5.95), the latest by James Herbert, and *Dead and Buried* by Chelsea Quinn

Yarbro (*Warner Books*, £2.50), a novatisation of a forthcoming movie.

Horror novels, it seems to me, are quite easy to do, but very difficult to do well. The short story seems a more natural form: you build up atmosphere and suspense, produce your climactic shock, and bring the story to a close while the reader is still (you hope) trembling. Many horror movies use this kind of structure. In a novel you need something more, if the story is not to become boring and repetitious — you need a reasonable plot, for one thing, and some developed characters. It isn't enough to have a hideous creature leap out from behind a bush at the end of every other chapter. Unfortunately, James Herbert's novel relies on precisely this sort of affect.

The Dark is about an evil miasma,

growing in the cellar of a South London house, which threatens in the course of the novel to envelop London, and perhaps the world. Within its influence anyone less than totally pure in heart goes avily berserk. Only the hero — a rather sceptical ghost-hunter — and his chums stand between humanity and disaster. Their story, as they struggle to understand and finally to destroy the Dark, takes up alternate chapters. The others are filled with a series of incidents in which we meet a new character, are told about their background for a couple of pages, and then see them either transformed into crazed lunatics, or dismembered one by one. This gives Mr Herbert lots of opportunity for lurid, violent description. I found it increasingly tedious. Mr Herbert, whose previous novels include *The Rats*, is a popular



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BOOK WORLD

writer. On the basis of this book it's hard to see why.

Dead and Buried is a much better read, though at the end it proves to be another short story padded out to novel length. It's based on a screenplay by Ronald Shusett and Dan O'Bannon, but don't expect the movie to be another *Alien*. This is the stuff of low-budget horror movies — yet another zombie story — and on that level promises to be quite enjoyable. The novel is very competently written — Chelsea Quinn Yarbro is now establishing quite a reputation — and appears to be a more conscientious job than most movie novelisations, which generally read as though the author had one eye on the clock and the other on his bank balance. I'd recommend it with reservations — chiefly that with this sort of thing I'd far sooner see the film than read the book. I don't know who the British publisher will be — the copy I have is an American preview — but doubt-

less it will be appearing soon enough.

Just published by Gollancz is a new novel by Robert Silverberg, *Lord Valentine's Castle* (£6.95). Silverberg established himself in the early 70s as one of the leading sf writers, then made a much-publicised retirement, disappointed and disillusioned with the reception accorded his work. This new novel is his comeback, and is a complete change of style. Gone is the old intense, rather pessimistic Silverberg; instead we have a long epic sf adventure set on a distant planet in the far future, full of colour, action and romance. If you enjoy Farmer, McCaffrey or Vance this is probably a book for you. I have to admit I was rather disappointed with it — it's a novel of epic length but not, it seemed to me, of epic scope — but others who have read it are much more enthusiastic.

When *Lord Valentine's Castle* was first sold in the USA it set a new record for an sf novel, receiving an advance of 125,000 dollars. Other books have since surpassed that figure, most recently Frank Herbert's eagerly awaited fourth *Dune* novel.

Together with at least one other Herbert novel it has been sold to the American publisher Berkley/Putnam for an advance rumoured to be 750,000 dollars. The novel is currently titled *Sandworms of Dune*, and Herbert expects to complete the final draft in the next few months. It's set about 3,500 years after the events of *Children of Dune*, but Let Atreides is still Emperor. Gollancz will be publishing the book in this country, and with luck it should be available towards the end of next year.

I hope in each of these columns to focus briefly on one particular publisher.

Finally, I hope in each of these columns to focus briefly on one particular publisher. This time it's Arrow Books, whose fiction editor is Richard Evans, formerly with Fontana and Futura (paperback editors have a habit of moving from company to company), and a man with a strong interest in sf and fantasy. Arrow's list has previously consisted of a number of James Blish titles, series by Marion Zimmer Bradley and E.C. Tubb, and little else. Richard has set out to rectify this, so that Arrow is one of the very few publishers actually increasing its output of sf and fantasy at present. He is also refreshingly willing to consider new authors, and has recently bought a first novel by Welsh author David Langford (who has previously had two non-fiction



books published). It's called *The Space Easter*, and should be published next year. Arrow have also bought two novels by a new young American writer, Jeffrey Carver; the first *Star Rigger's Way*, is published in September. From January 1980 they'll be publishing one book a month, and already have some good stuff lined up. Richard is particularly excited about *Shadow of the Torturer*, the first book of a fantasy tetralogy by Gene Wolfe, which has been amazingly well-received in the USA. Wolfe is an extraordinarily good writer, far too little-known in this country, and the series should be well worth looking out for. ●

ALSO RECEIVED:

The Earth Book of Stormgate — 1 by Poul Anderson (NEL, 95p), *The Forbidden Tower* by Marion Zimmer Bradley (Arrow £1.35), *Infinite Dreams* by Joe Haldeman (Futura, £1.25), *The Day After Tomorrow* by Robert Heinlein (NEL, 95p), *The Night of Kadar* by Garry Kilworth (Penguin, 95p), *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* by Ed McBain (Sphere, 95p), *New Soviet Science Fiction* (Macmillan, no price given), *The Starchild Trilogy* by Pohl and Williamson (Penguin, £1.95), *A World Between* by Norman Spinrad (Arrow, £1.35), *Haven of Darkness* by E.C. Tubb (Arrow 85p), *The Gryb* by A.E. Van Vogt (NEL, 90p), *Chocky* by John Wyndham (Penguin, 85p), *We* by Yevgeny Zamiatin (Penguin, £1.10), *Frostworld and Dreamfire* by John Morressy (NEL, 95p).

Silverberg
LENTINE'S
STLE



RECORD WORLD

With the past couple of years' selection of sf films, we have also been supplied with a variety of soundtrack recordings, some of which have worked and some of which haven't.

The film that started it all, way back in 1978, produced to date the most easily identifiable musical soundtrack — *Star Wars* — with all the themes guaranteed to stick in your brain, whether you liked them or not! All the films that followed tended to be compared fairly or unfairly but not unneatly, with this maiden voyage. Some, though, did make their own distinctive impression, *Close Encounters* and *Alien* in particular, and now there are three more to add to the overall list.

John Barry's soundtrack for *The Black Hole* seems to be percolated by an incessant beat, reminiscent of — you guessed it — *James Bond*! The trouble appears to be that Bond music generally relies on short sharp themes from strings or brass sections with a percussion accompaniment. This has followed through to *The Black Hole* with the consequence that I even checked back to the *Moonraker* disc as I was convinced I'd heard one track before. As it happened, I hadn't, it just seemed as if I had! The opening march theme — why are they always marches? — reminded me of a war film and although *The Black Hole* contained some fights I don't think that could legitimately be expanded to mean a whole war. This impression is unfortunately strengthened as the theme tails off into a quiet section that lacks only a voice-over saying "By 1941 the enemy..."

As with many soundtrack albums, it's little pieces that tend to stand out, rather than the whole score, which isn't really the way it should be. There is one theme which contains the same two notes as *Holst* used as the background motif to the *Saturn* movement to *The Planets* suite. Strangely enough, when we first hear this, as side 1, track 2, the following track *The Door Opens* starts with a few bars that are almost a continuation of *Saturn*. But this doesn't last and we are soon plunged back into Bond.

The record cover is unusual as it does not feature the standard publicity art-work or logo for the film. Instead there is a different rendering of the *Cygnus* being drawn into the *Black Hole*, which does not look like one of *Peter Ellenshaw's* original production paintings. However the sleeve does boast that this is a Digital Recording so perhaps a few words would be in order as to just what this means to the listener. Actually not a lot, for the process at the moment is used during the recording, not the playback stage. The disc itself is exactly as any other modern recording, although experts with sharp ears maintain that the sound is cleaner. Digital discs will come eventually (in fact, video discs are digital), but the process by

which the signal is encoded on the disc is completely different to conventional records. They are read by laser, not a stylus, and the resulting quality is potentially "out of this world".

My overall impression of the sound track is mixed. It's by no means as good as *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*, *Alien* or *Close Encounters*, but has its moments and the amazingly low price for these days must also be taken into account, not much more than a 12 inch single.

Quite a bit more than a 12 inch single, or to put it another way, full price, comes *The Black Hole's* contemporary. Frankly I don't think that *Star Trek - The Motion Picture* could have won which ever way it had gone. If it had kept the old tv style it would have been criticised for not progressing and as it had progressed, many bemoaned the fact that it did not keep to the



original formula. However, one thing that did improve by the transfer to the large screen was the music. With a little bit of editing here and there it could be a symphonic poem in its own right, without ever having to be put into the context of the film. However this does not mean that it clashes with the visuals, the strong musical score adds to the effect.

Composed by Jerry Goldsmith as his second entry to the world of sf films his musical arrangements are pure symphonic with a large, though unfortunately uncredited, orchestra supplying the sounds. Added to the normal contingent is a piano, organ and harp and a wide range of percussion including a xylophone and a glockenspiel. For the weirder moments an instrument is used that sounds suspiciously like the one employed by Maurice Jarre for his *Lawrence of Arabia* score. If it is, it's an electronic keyboard instrument, though not a synthesiser in the modern sense, called an *Onde Martinote* and adds just the right amount of alien touches to the more usual orchestral line-up.

The opening theme is in the form of a march, which could in theory be likened to *Star Wars*, but this one luckily has its own definite personality. As in the film, it leads direct into the destruction of the Klingon fleet, a very

effective sequence, with a score perfectly matching the oncoming threat of the Klingon Vessels. This I found, if anything, to be the most successful use of scoring in the whole film.

As individualistic as the music is, there are touches of other composers and influences. In particular traces of 20th Century composers such as *Richard Strauss*, *Stravinsky* and, especially, *Vaughan Williams* come to mind. The incessant beat from the strings conjures up *Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring* during the Klingon destruction and the quiet passage during *The Enterprise* track is reminiscent of the quiet interlude during *Vaughan Williams's 6th Symphony* (and which was also used as the theme to the tv series *A Family at War*). *Ilia's Theme*, side 2, track 1, is played on the piano, with orchestra accompaniment, and almost comes over like the second movement to a *Rachmaninov* or *Shostakovich* concerto. Echoes of other sf scores appear as a rapid pizzicato by the strings right at the end of the *Klingon Destruction* which to me is the hallmark of *Silent Running*. Jerry Goldsmith's other acknowledged sf masterpiece, the *Alien* theme, is quoted during side 2, track 3, *The Meld*.

The orchestration throughout is excellent and mention must be made of *Arthur Morton* who has orchestrated many a film score in his career and is in many ways just as important as the composer. The large orchestra with its variety of instruments is well employed with particularly effective use being made of the piano and organ. Side 1, track 4, *The Enterprise* find both these keyboard instruments being used and they complement each other surprisingly well. (If you are interested in another piece of music that uses the same combination, listen to *Saint Saens Symphony No. 3*, more normally known as the *Organ Symphony*.) The piano also provides, along with *Onde Martinote*, suitable eeriness during *The Cloud*, with additional sounds coming from the strings playing very high, the brass playing very low, and the xylophone. By the time the penultimate track is reached — *Spock's Walk* — there appears to be four keyboard instruments involved; the piano, organ, *Onde Martinote* and what sounds like a harmonium. All in all an excellent piece of orchestration and an incredible sight should it ever be performed at a concert.

Oddly the original *Star Trek* theme, written by *Alexander Courage* and *Gene Roddenberry* and which is heard twice in the film, is not on the recording, although I must admit I don't miss it.

The record packaging is fairly lavish, even by today's standards, and contains a full cover inner sleeve. This depicts stills from the film on one side and on the reverse a selection of Federation aliens, even if we didn't see them in

THIS MONTH, REGULAR RECORD REVIEWER
MAT IRVINE LOOKS AT THREE RECENT SCIENCE
FICTION FILM SOUNDTRACK ALBUMS, *THE
BLACK HOLE*, *STAR TREK THE MOTION PICTURE*,
AND *THE STAR WARS SEQUEL THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*.



the UK release print!

The cover features the rather excellent publicity art-work in full rainbow colours and as a bonus a small poster of the new Enterprise is included. I only wish a special label could have been printed for the record itself, the standard CBS label seems to let the rest of the peckaging down. If Mika Dildfield and Sky can have this honour, I would have thought that the most expensive of film, to date, would be just as deserving. However this is a small gripe and in no way detracts from this soundtrack, which I will be returning to many times.

However much the public was intrigued by the aforementioned films, *The Empire Strikes Back* has probably overshadowed both by being the first of the sequels (sorry, I don't count *The Cylon Attack*). Possibly the most interest sprang from a morbid curiosity as to whether it was going to fall flat on its face as do many sequels. As it turned out I think it did work, given the established formulae and this was followed through to the music.

Hot on the heels of the London premiere came the record, very eye-catching with the shadowy mask of Darth Vader prominent on a starry background. But at this stage a certain amount of confusion set in. I rapidly realised there appeared to be two versions, both the almost identical covers, but one was a single LP and the other, a double set. It transpired that the UK market was thought to be interested in only half of the soundtrack, but just in case you wanted almost all that *John Williams* wrote, the US version was reasonably widely available.

Quite why this distinction was made is not clear. If one wants a soundtrack album, I would have thought that any collector would like the fullest version available. But of course the single version is that much cheaper, and you do get all the main themes on this record. However this is not the complete story, for the double album is not just a second record, and could potentially

be the better buy. The UK disc provides notes on the liner sleeve only, although they are fairly extensive. A short description of each track is given, along with a brief biography of composer John Williams and — a nice touch I think — a breakdown of the LSO members that played on the recording...

On the reverse is a selection of stills from the film, but in black and white. However if you buy the American version you get all these pictures, in colour, a lot larger in the form of a booklet. Consequently you pay your money...

Many of the original themes from *Star Wars* make their appearance in the new score, although Williams has rightly kept them to the background. The most prominent is the *Imperial March* which doubles as *Darth Vader's Theme* and is heard at the beginning of the film following on from the main *Star Wars* theme. It tends to recur throughout the film whenever the Imperial Forces, and Lord Vader in particular, tend to be threatening, which they are through most of the action. It is a very effective piece of music that exactly sets the mood and in my usual game of spotting other composers' influences, I reckon it has more than a touch of *Shestakovitch* about it. Compare it for example with his *7th Symphony (the Leningrad Symphony)*, which was itself featured in the film *The Billion Dollar Brain*. The theme was in fact hinted at in the *Star Wars* score, especially the incessant beat, but was never fully developed. *Yoda*, the Muppet to end all Muppets, has his own theme. A quiet little piece of music, reminiscent of Williams' own score for *Superman*, and thankfully with absolutely no trace of *Animal's* drumming.

After *The Imperial March*, I found the most exhilarating track to be *The Asteroid Field*, which accompanies the Millennium Falcon as she is being pursued by the TIEs. Definitely cops and robbers car chase stuff.

The most alien sound is produced for the *Battle in the Snow*, where the Imperial Walkers are approaching the rebel outpost. For this eight percussionists, two pianists and three harpists are added to the usual LSO complement.

Yoda and the Force opens with a version of *Ban Kenobi's* theme from the first film, which also doubles as the motif for *The Force*. It changes to *Yoda's* own theme as he rises the crashed X-Wing from the swamp, but ends on a sinister note as *The Imperial March* is quoted.

The third new theme is introduced to accompany the developing relationship between the Princess and Han, or is it the Princess and Luke; possibly even the Princess and Chewie?

All these tracks are on both records. The US edition brings the total playing time to 75 minutes, out of the entire score of 117. You get as additions, *The Heroics of Luke and Han*,

which combines Luke's escape from the ice cave and the final section of the Falcon's departure from the living hiding place in the asteroid.

Also *The Departure of Boba Fett* as his ship, *Slave 1*, leaves Baspin with a rather cold Han on board. The love theme is quoted in a muted key and the action changes to *Luka* as he finds his way to the carbon freezing chamber and *Darth Vader*.

Hyperspace is in a similar idiom to *The Asteroid Field* as it accompanies the attempt, and eventual success, of getting the Falcon into her *Faster Than Light* mode and escaping the Imperial fleet.

The City in the Clouds follows the Falcon's approach to Baspin where it is intercepted by the Twin Pod Cloud Cars (try saying that after a couple of drinks) and escorted to the landing platform. Virtually all the themes are quoted during this passage, *Yoda's* being particularly



appropriate as it definitely reminds me of the flying sequence from *Superman* ("you'll believe a Millennium Falcon can fly"). The track ends with the sighting of the City and a warning note of distant women's voices — sirens?

Whichever record, single or double, you settle on, I think you will find the listening enjoyable and a worthy successor to the *Star Wars* soundtrack.

The Black Hole, composed by John Berry
Disneyland/Pickwick. Cat: SHM 3017. Price
RRP £1.75.

Star Trek - The Motion Picture, composed
by Jerry Goldsmith. CBS Records. Cat:
70174. Price: £5.29.

The Empire Strikes Back, composed by
John Williams and played by the London
Symphony Orchestra. RSO Records. UK No
RSO Super RS 23 rrp £4.95 (US No
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A STARBURST INTERVIEW

GLEN LARSON

Part One

In Hollywood, Tony Crawley talks exclusively to the tv father of *Galactica* and *Buck Rogers* — about the films, the series and the whole mish-mash of American television networking.

High, high in the heady stratosphere of Universal's Black Tower building — in part of the old studio lot, now known as Universal City — sits tv superman, Glen A. Larson. The one-time pop-singer and composer has two side-by-side offices, and a matching brace of secretaries in a further section out-front. The office that is empty today is called his piano room — "that's where he composes most of his scores and themes for the shows," explained his Girl Friday, as we waited for him to come off the phone.

In the other office, Larson is behind a vast desk, full of phones, scripts, notes, papers, magazines, Press cuttings, xeroxed sheets, production logo sketches for his five prime-time hours of television programming turned out by his unit every week — with a further two or three in the pipeline for the autumn season.

There is, inevitably a tv set. At least one . . . Not that he finds much time to use it.

The rest of the office — large but not huge — seemed crowded at first glance with books, framed photos, posters, sofas, an assortment of hats, and varied chunky souvenirs of one show or another. I never had a second glance. No time. There is, as I was to discover, rarely any time for anything other than television in the mad, mad world of American television. Larson, in his effable largesse, had promised the visiting Limey a half-hour's rep: fortunately, he didn't quit when the time was up . . . Although we ran on a little, there was never time to sit back, and reflect on the man or his working environment. The lights on his phones kept flashing. The calls were mounting up . . .

Time is not only money in US-tv — it's the cause, the be-all and end-all of US tv. Time off, for interviews — beyond interviewing actors for roles — is rare. Even now; for this was the hietus season. All



the series were on vacation. But not *The Boss*. He had his new shows in the offing, scripts to be ordered, tailored and hopefully approved by one or another of the top three networks, and when if so, shooting schedules to be arranged for both (both in Hawaii) for the early summer. Stars to be found, guest-stars lined up, plus a phalanx of directors, cinematographers, make-up and stunt men, hairdressers and costumiers . . . the whole shebang. Then, how to fit them in with his team making *Buck Rogers* in the 25th Century, the new (or revived) *Galactica* 1980, *BJ* and the Bear, *The Misadventures of Sheriff Lobo* . . .

All these, too, have to be slotted in with the schedules of Universal's other shows: Jack Klugman's *Quincy ME*; Ken Johnson's *Incredible Hulk*; Jack Webb's new one, *The 25th Man*; *Culpepper*; and the film-into-series format of *Semi-Tough* . . . which doesn't seem to leave much room for Universal's pukka movies (aka movie-movies), tv-movies, not to mention the entire Universal Studio Tours attraction.

It's a hectic life in Universal City! Larson, who amazingly does not rete

live a single paragraph in Leslie Helliwell's *Tele Guide* book (although Little and Large doll), tired of his musical life and quit "touring literally thousands of college detes" with The Four Preps group in the mid-60s. He switched from singing, and writing songs, to scripting. He started with Quinn Martin's 1964/5 version of the old Gregory Peck war-movie, *12 O'Clock High*. Then, in astonishingly rapid order — even for the frenetic State-side tv biz — he vaulted from freelance scenarist to tv executive. He sold a script to Robert Wagner's *It Takes A Thief* (1965/9) at Universal, became the series' story-editor straight away. By the third episode, he was the producer.

In 1970, he moved over to the final season of *The Virginian* — when it was called *Men from Shiloh* — and produced all Doug McClure's segments. He never left his typewriter — or his piano — far behind him. Today, he's one of US television's most prolific writers, producers (or creators and developers in US-tv language), and indeed composers, up to that Black Tower. His track-record includes *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Alias Smith and Jones*, *McCloud*, *Switch*, *Quincy ME*, *The Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew Mysteries*, *Sword of Justice* . . . and then, of course, he struck it rich with the sf shows, *Galactica* and *Buck Rogers*.

Considering the output he commands, and the quite insane stories he tells of tv networks rushing in with two left feet to both inopportune and then assassinate — and then resurrect — shows, he is one of the great survivors of the tv jungle. He's looking very good on it, too, though complaining that the tv industry — in America — chews people up as quickly as programmes. "I think we're doing considerable physical damage to people working in television." More goes on in tv land over here than we know about back in Britain. Very little of it — like their programmes — is sensible.

Starburst: Why was Battlestar Galactica stopped?

Glen Larson: Well, it hasn't. It's back! *Touche. I mean the original concept...* Well, it's very interesting. It has to do with a kind of phenomenon in television. I guess the ABC network had one of these seasons that occurs only once in ten or twenty years. They had a surplus of riches. I don't think they had anything that wasn't in the high 30s or 40s [CBS and the current back-slider, NBC], but competitively, it was a very unusual year. It looked like ABC had a lock that no one would be able to break for five years — because television is a habit medium. *And ironically, ABC busted that lock itself, right?*

Right. ABC broke peoples' habits by moving their shows around. They looked at the schedule and they, I think, miscalculated. Sunday night for one. Sunday night here is the HUD night.

I take it you're not referring to Paul Newman?

HUD is the highest-sets-in use night, it has to do with how many people are watching. Sunday is the highest, Friday is the lowest. Everyone in the family is



for the year, 1978-79, and *Battlestar Galactica* was the 24th most popular show in the whole year. And yet other shows that were continued by the networks had come beneath *Galactica*... *CHiPs*, *Lou Grant*, *The Waltons*, *Dallas*, *Incredible Hulk* and one of mine at 55th position, *BJ and the Bear*.

They're still running and Galactica was axed. As I say: how come?

We happened to be on Sunday night, 8pm, and we'd had everything imaginable thrown at us, Centennial and everything, which was more expensive than our show, and a marvellous show — there's no joy in beating a Centennial, because you want that show to be seen. It's unfortunate that all these things collide on Sunday night. The Emmy Show was against us, the World Series, the World Series Super Show with Bob Hope... you go down

the list of the movies up against us and it was literally ludicrous. It was great! *A kind of respect for your power...*

But our programme was very much premature in going on the air. We really should have gone on about six months

***Battlestar Galactica* enjoyed one of the largest audiences of any movie in history.**

watching and advertisers are therefore charged the most on Sundays. We, comparatively for the year, did what I would consider exceptionally well. Not only for the history of science-fiction, but for any kinda show. Let me get out one of my xerox sheets here... *Variety* publishes a list, in this case of 112 shows

Buck Rogers is about earth, in the future — but based on the point of view of a guy from now.

later, because we were geared to do a wonderful opening episode, then maybe one or two more, then we'd take a little dip — like a plane taking off from an aircraft carrier, series go down before they come up. Everyone expected the moon. Every show had to be brilliant and motion picture in scope. And, frankly, we had to make a transition from a special effects plant that we'd rented from 20th Century-Fox to one we were building ourselves. Then... you get a little fall-off. Your audience starts to stabilise and kind of comes back.

I don't know what our final numbers were, but ABC and I predicted it ahead of time — they took their most successful show of the year, *Mork and Mindy*, and put that into our Sunday night 8pm time slot... and it wound up with the same ratings we were getting. That was a big shock to them. By that time, they had broken up all their nights. They'd changed Tuesday, from *Happy Days* and *Laverne and Shirley* and totally turned the network around. We were going to Sunday 7pm — where we are now. Instead, someone at Paramount talked ABC into trying two unproved comedies or something and we went...

What happens when you're cancelled like that. Do you get to the end of your filmed run or are there some shows in the can someplace?

Oh we had a full year — 24 shows, 25...





Opposite above and below: Two scenes from Mission Galactica: The Cylon Attack. Above: Commander Adama (Lorne Greene), paternal hero of the Battletar series. Right: A 25th century disco from the Buck Rogers television series.



a lot of hours. We had talked about what we'd do if we went to 7pm because, again it's a very difficult time slot. It has to be news or something with special appeal for children.

It's the God Slot in Britain — and I don't mean like your crazy evangelist shows here!

That's not far removed from what we had to do with it. (Laugh). Very difficult slot. It's a challenge and it's fun, too. By that time, Isaac Asimov was talking to us and we had some fresh ideas and then, out of left field, and because of that romance ABC had going with Paramount — Happy Days, Laverne and Shirley, and Mork and Mindy — they said, *Hey, let us handle that time slot*. And they went with it. We were shocked. Totally shocked. We had no perception that they would just totally abandon Battletar Galactica.

I don't think science-fiction has to fail on television, but it does have a narrower band with audiences as a general rule.

Particularly with the success of the movie-version, first in Canada, then Europe — and even, surprisingly for a tv series, in America.

We weren't going to open in the United States . . . It's a question of who you're talking to, but we felt we had an opportunity in the motion picture theatres anywhere we went. We offered the feature to Vision Opportunity here at Universal. But they felt that science fiction had had its shot. We said that didn't mean that anything else in science fiction would not do well.

There seems to have been slightly different versions of the movie in varying countries. Who puts the movie version together?

Had we gone for the theatres when we wanted to, we would probably have made

quite a number of adjustments in the script. There is a big difference in tv and movies. In tv, you get involved with the network committees as to what you can or can't use. I mean, they rearrange some of the Soap scripts and other things they consider important to them. It becomes less of your own and more of a joint effort. So we probably would have released a slightly different version. As a matter of fact, once they elected to go with the film to Canada, we had to change the ending and a few other things to, at least, give it a button . . . so it didn't feel like "We'll solve this one next week" and have everyone run out of the theatre in search of a hatchet. So we did make some changes, but only those we could make on the spot.

It was a foregone conclusion it would be a European release — and it did very well. You'd have to say that the special effects were terribly ambitious, especially for something geared for television at the time. We had the best. We went after the best. If we were going to bring science fiction to television, we don't want to be a pale throwback to what had happened in the past. The motion picture audience was already acclimated to better effects through Trumbull, Dykstra and others. That's why, from the outset of the series, we said, why don't we try to get them . . . and people were surprised that we did get Dykstra and people like that.

The reviews on Mission Galactica — The Cylon Attack are not so good. How do you compare your two son-of-tv movie releases?

I don't have any real cop-outs on the first one, except that had I been making it for the theatres to begin with, I would have made some adjustments and stuck to my guns on the main script. There were a few areas where I wouldn't have allowed it to . . . Well, I mean we had a thing called the Socialator in there, a sort of euphemism for a hooker or something. A socially

unacceptable person . . . our way of saying let's have a mix of people in our fleet of survivors. Well, somehow that became important to the network and I took a lot of shots from the Press over it — putting such a character in a children's show. Given my choice, I would have kept the first script. I tried to put as much of it back as I could for the movie release.

Are you avoiding comment on Mission Galactica?

No . . . In terms of the second one, it's basically a cut of two (I think) of our larger television episodes; we made a number of two-hour Galactica television movies — for the sweep, the high rating period, when you always have to throw in something special. And the second film was basically put together by the branch in our studio that assembles material

Isaac Asimov was talking to us — we had no perception that they'd just totally abandon Battletar Galactica.

from the television and for theatrical release.

Not Guilty, you mean?
(He smiled).

If ABC gave Galactica the cold shoulder, how did you manage to get Buck Rogers going on tv. I would have thought NBC would have passed, saying, isn't this roughly the same as you've just had cancelled elsewhere?

Well, ABC didn't buy it. I think the truth of the matter is that the NBC network possibly respected the ratings that Galactica had gone off the air with, numbers that would have been respectable to them and so they said, let's take a shot with this. Based on two things. First of all, the performance of the Buck Rogers in the 25th Century motion picture at the box-office. And two, it had



Left: One of the many beauties who populate the Buck Rogers tv series. Above: Buck's robot companion, Twiki, as portrayed by Felix Silla (voice by Mel "Bugs Bunny" Blanc). Right: Maren Jensen portrays Athena, daughter of Commander Adams in the *Battlestar* tv series. Far right: Richard Hetch plays Captain Appollo in the *Battlestar* series. Below right: Twiki the Robot (Felix Silla) meets the president of *Genesis* in the Buck Rogers tv episode *The Cosmic Whiz-Kid*.

a common denominator that might have seemed more attractive.

A single hero, you mean?

One of the problems we had with *Galactica* was getting that mid-part of America to lock in on it and feel comfortable with it. The Identification Factor. Buck Rogers was about Earth. It was in the future, but it was based on the point of view of a guy from now. I see the film version as our Burt Reynolds in *Space*. (Laugh). The television version has had a little less humour, less of the kind of sardonic wit we had in the feature.

*This time you started in the cinema, then Buck hit tv, an intriguing switchover after your *Galactica* experience.*

I made up my mind very early not to spend another year in the trenches. *Galactica* was hand to mouth. Then, I violated the rule when ABC came back to us recently and said, maybe we made a mistake...

We'll get to that... But how did the Buck Rogers movie evolve?

We started to make a television show again. We offered it to the movie division at Universal and once again we were turned down. Then, when they started to see our early footage and started to weigh what was happening with *Galactica* in the theatres, they began thinking they had an expensive television-movie on their hands — these things aren't cheap — and wanted to recoup as much of their money as they could.

They, in fact, underestimated it in the theatres, I believe. They sold it short. They sold it fast... I Get in and get out in a hurry. One of the heads of the studio predicted to me that we'd get killed in the reviews. In point of fact, the reviews

were money-reviews. They were terrific! All the way from the *LA Times* to *NBC Today*. We had good reviews in Britain too, right? I think people accepted it as a very entertaining piece. They weren't there to rip it. Consequently, we — or Universal — sold it for short money on a fast run.

Although you opened Buck Rogers as a movie first, you had really begun making it for tv. What changes did you make, then, for the cinemas?

Well, I went back and put some of the

If we're going to bring science fiction to television, we don't want a pale throwback to the past.

things back that Standards and Practices of NBC had made me take out — for children viewers. So indeed, the movie did have quite an adult level going at the same time. Some of the double-entendres went back in, obviously. There were a few that were (laugh)... marginal.

Burt Reynoldsish?

Exactly! I feel they were just as acceptable for television, but when we did, indeed, air the movie on NBC we took a couple of them back out again.

Such as...

Well, we had a little mechanical robot, Twiki. He's played by Felix Silla and Mel Blanc supplies the voice... and we all admire Mel, he's a wonderful character... And I believe he says at one point, "I'm freezing my ball bearings off." There were a couple like that that Standards and Practices took exception to for television...

Really?

Really! I'm not sure if they kept the one when the beautiful Ardala is dancing and Mel's Twiki says, "What a body!" Harmless enough.

I'm not sure if we lost that one or not... But there were a couple of those which they felt were marginal for the time-slot. They'd let them go at 10pm. But they do second-guess themselves a lot.

Wouldn't you like to do something more serious on science-fiction — or can't tv, American tv, cut it? I gather The Martian Chronicles was not received too well here, in fact.

No, but I don't know why. I didn't see it at all. I saw portions of it. I understand Ray Bradbury wasn't too happy with it. Whether it faithfully represented what it could have been, I don't know. I don't think science-fiction has to fail on television. I do think that science fiction *per se* has a narrower band with audiences as a general rule. So that which you do has to be very special. You have to promote it and present it just right. Certainly, *Battlestar Galactica* enjoyed one of the largest audiences of any movie in television history. So let's say there is a market for it. Sustaining it on a week to week basis, I think, is totally a level of execution. I don't know if anyone has all the answers on that. It's harder to get broad identification to that form.

*But why does it have to be an across-board appeal? If books sell — and sell well — to less than the majority. But what you termed The Identification Factor is obviously cardinal rule in tv here. On the other hand, there seems to be no rules. You've had one series, *Galactica*, that was a hit, and became a movie, or indeed two... You have a movie of Buck Rogers*



that's also a hit, and then becomes a series . . . and you also make BJ and the Bear, which is just a regular tv series . . . now you have another, The Misadventures of Sheriff Lobo, which is a spin-off of BJ. You've used every path there is to television and they all seem to work for you.

Yeah, but I don't think we have invented any of these variations on the theme. We've just been exposed or had opportunities to utilise them. You have to be very resourceful in television these days. It's fiercely competitive.

Buck Rogers was sort of our Burt Reynolds In Space. The tv version has less sardonic wit.

And not just the old inter-network battles. There's more competition today from Video-cassettes, cablevision, satellite television . . .

I've noticed that the network shares don't add up as high as they used to. There's a possibility that somewhere along the line, some people are getting drained off to something else. I think local stations are doing better, they're presenting movies in a more interesting way — uninterrupted, or with just one or two commercials. All that's very innovative. And does present competition. People are not nearly as concerned what a network is . . . as the networks are. ●



Next issue: Glen Larson explains the re-birth of his old show in its new form: *Galactica 1980* . . . his background in science fiction . . . and still more lessons from a proven master in dealing with the maddening, soul-destroying industry that is television in America.

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